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ABSTRACT

This document consists of the three 1999 issues of a journal reporting new research in early child development conducted by the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Articles in the Winter 1999 issue focus on the transition to kindergarten and first grade, including adjustment issues; educational practices reflecting training on transition; school readiness; readiness to teach; rights and responsibilities of schools and families; classroom practices; social stratification; fragile X syndrome children; and children with disabilities. The Spring 1999 issue focuses on family-centered research and practices, and includes articles on the intentionality of infants, cultural diversity, marital disagreements and infant interaction, and increasing family involvement in early education and intervention programs. The Fall 1999 issue deals with the relationship between research and practice and includes articles on the National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study, changes in training for early childhood professionals, the development of new assessment tools, and public policy changes. Each issue also lists recent publications by researchers at the Frank Porter Graham Development Center. (KB)

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Early Developments, 1999

Loyd Little, Ed.

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Promoting continuity in the lives of young children

early Developments

Volume 3, No. 1

Kindergarten Transition

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Field notes

SENDING YOUR CHILDREN off to preschool programs and to kindergarten can be tough: the first loosening of the apron strings; the first serious strangers in your child's life; and the constant worry your child will tell everyone that you watch soap operas on television.

Evidence shows that this is also a pivotal time in a child's development. For the first time, a child will be expected to use his/her intellectual, social, and physical skills in a formal setting. There are new expectations, new relationships, and new experiences. Successful transition is known to be a component of long-term school success. There are numerous practices and policies in place to ease such transitions for children and their families—meetings with parents, open houses, letters, phone calls, and orientations. We are just now beginning systematic research in documenting how effective these activities are.

In this issue of *Early Developments*, we look at

- a new research study looking at the transition experiences of children with fragile X syndrome,
- a new study by FPG researchers, "Creating Risk and Promise: Children's and Teachers' Constructions in the Cultural World of Kindergarten,"
- initial data and analyses from a major new national survey of kindergarten teachers' perceptions of transition practices by the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL), and
- a spirited three-day research synthesis conference, sponsored by NCEDL, on transitions held last year.

This is fascinating and fertile ground. For example, teachers say a major barrier is that they get class lists, on the average, 15 days before kindergarten starts. Not enough time, they say, to organize meetings with parents before school starts. The bottom line, according to NCEDL researcher Robert Pianta, is that "the nation has a long way to go in ensuring that all children come to school ready to learn, and ensuring that schools make the necessary provisions to reach out to their families."

Successful transitions mean, of course, far more than a handful of practices by teachers. In the larger context, they are a function of the family, the education system, preschool programs, and the community.

—Loyd Little
editor

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From the director's office

Passages

This month's "From The Director's Office" is a guest column by Pam Winton, an investigator with the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center. Pam is a nationally recognized child development researcher and head of the Research to Practice Strand of the National Center for Early Development & Learning.

— Don Bailey, Director, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center

LAST FALL, OUR YOUNGEST SON TURNED 13, our middle son left home to begin his first year of college, and our oldest son, a college graduate living abroad whom I thought was "emancipated" from the family nest, returned home to live. It was a year of transitions, and our family had to make significant adjustments. Roles, responsibilities and familiar patterns (e.g., Who mows the lawn? Who does the dishes?) had to be renegotiated. You might say we experienced the disequilibrium typical to moving from one phase of the family life cycle into another. That the first two phases were somewhat familiar and expected (we had been parents of a 13-year-old son twice, and had already sent one son off to college) helped, but the third was unexpected and demanded some adjustments on our part.

Transitions like these are, to be sure, a natural part of family growth and development. They create stress because they demand changes in familiar patterns and routines, but they also give rise to complex adaptive responses that strengthen families in unique ways—all of which prepares them for ongoing changes that are an inevitable part of living. I say "complex" because research suggests that the interaction of many factors predicts how an individual family will react to transition events. Examples are numerous: How families define situations, the meaning they attach to events, and a range of past experiences in similar situations, are but a few important ones. The presence of informal resources (such as friends, family, and neighbors) and formal supports (such as professionals or institutions) taken together contribute to the creative process of adaptation.

This issue of *Early Developments* focuses on the role of formal institutions in family adaptations to the critical event of school entry. Our family's fall transition experiences pale in comparison to those that often face families of young children at that juncture. We had to relate to only one new educational institution, and, in that case, could count on our son being old enough to create a partnership on his own. We had also negotiated a series of educational transitions in the past that gave us confidence in formal institutions. The articles in this issue describe what we know from research about creating positive experiences that build such confidence for young children and families and focus predominantly on the continuity and supportive connections between educational systems.

Several underlying themes of the research reported emerge upon careful reading. The importance of ensuring successful transitions is first, and paramount. Research on the subject is clear: successful adjustments to school are critical for long-term successes as students and adults. Another emergent theme is that current education policies and practices do not consistently support connections that provide stability to children and families during transitions. There are glaring problems, but most alarming are those findings that suggest the most vulnerable children are the least likely to experience adequate transition planning. A last and vital theme is that focused attention on transitions by teachers, parents, and educational systems can make a positive difference. Research findings reported in this issue point toward promising solutions, such as reduced student-teacher ratios, individualized transition plans that engage parents, schools and communities as partners in preparing for transitions and relationships that ensure children receive all necessary services. The broad gap between proposed solutions and descriptions of current practices means, however, that a lot of work remains to be done.

As a starting point, we might draw some basic conclusions from the available facts. That only 24% of kindergarten teachers surveyed

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NEARLY HALF THE NATION'S TEACHERS are concerned about many of the children entering kindergarten, according to a new national survey by the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL), a multi-university research center based at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Teachers are most frequently concerned about children's skills in following directions and in academics.

Making the

Teachers believe many children have problems in adjusting to kindergarten

THE TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN is a pivotal time in a child's development. It comes at an age when our culture expects increased independence from children. Children are called upon to employ and coordinate their intellectual, social, and physical skills in a formal setting, often for the first time. Kindergarten offers challenges to the child in literacy, numeracy, self-regulation, and social competence, and research shows that success during this first year may predict later school success. Martha Cox of UNC-Chapel Hill and Robert C. Pianta of the University of Virginia co-directed the Kindergarten Transitions Study with assistance from Diane M. Early and Lorriane C. Taylor, both at UNC-CH, and Sara E. Rimm-Kaufman and Karen M. La Paro from the University of Virginia.

Nearly 3,600 teachers answered the survey, which identified teachers' areas of concern in children's transition into kindergarten and into first grade; looked at what transition practices are and aren't being used; and asked teachers what barriers they see to doing more to facilitate transitions. Teachers report 52 percent of children have a successful entry into kindergarten, while 48 percent have moderate or serious problems.

Teachers report concerns less frequently in suburban and rural than in urban schools, in districts with lower poverty, and in schools with less cultural diversity. Less experienced teachers report higher rates of general and specific transition problems, Pianta said.

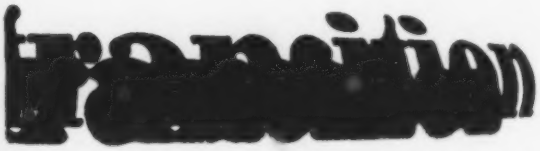
The teachers' reports of concerns may reflect a mismatch between the competency of children and teachers' expectations, Pianta said. For example, in culturally diverse schools white teachers perceive higher rates of child difficulty in following directions, social skills, and immaturity, compared to teachers in other ethnic groups. Rimm-Kaufman said, "The teacher's own ethnic status may sensi-

tize them to lack of congruence between children's home culture and school's mainstream culture."

The findings also indicate, said Pianta, that teachers in schools with the greatest needs (higher poverty, more culturally diverse, urban) rely more heavily on group-oriented transition practices that occur after the beginning of school than teachers in other settings. "These lower-intensity practices probably run counter to what the children and families in such schools need in order to connect with the school," he said.

Of 23 transition practices used by teachers for children entering kindergarten listed on the survey, the most common practices are "a talk with parents after school starts," followed, in order, by

- a letter to parents after the beginning of school
- an open house after school starts



- a flyer or brochure sent after school starts
- read records of child's past experience/status

The least common practice was "home visiting, both before and after the beginning of school." In order, the next least common were

- a call to the child before school starts
- a call to the child after school starts
- a visit to preschools and programs for 4-year olds

Perceived barriers

Teachers report that a major barrier to their helping more with children's transitions into kindergarten is that class lists are generated too late. Lists are received, on the average, 15 days before the first day of school. "As long as teachers do not know who their students will be, it is impossible for them to begin the transition process while the child is still in their preschool setting. The school is, in effect, requiring that the transition be an abrupt one," said Early.

Although family mobility and late registration prevent many schools from making early classroom assignments for all children, if schools could assign at least some children to kindergarten classrooms earlier, teachers would be more able to create a transition process, rather than a transition event, Pianta said.

These barriers can be placed in four broad categories:

- Administrative—"class lists generated too late," "plan not available in school/district," and "school/district doesn't support"

On your mark...

Percentages of teachers who say that about half of their class or more enter kindergarten with needs

Perceived Needs	
following directions	46%
academic skills	36%
home environment	35%
working independently	34%
formal preschool experience	31%
working in a group	30%
immaturity	20%
communicating	14%

Get set...

Percentages of perceived barriers selected by teachers.

(Teachers could check more than one item.)

Class lists generated too late	56%
Summer work not supported by salary	47%
Transition plan not available	43%
Takes too much time	37%
Dangerous to visit homes	33%
Parents don't bring child to registration/open house	32%
Can't reach parents	27%
Parents not interested	25%
Parents can't read letters sent home	21%
No school or district support	20%
Materials not available	19%
I choose not to do it	11%
Preschool teachers not interested	7%
Concern about creating negative expectations	7%
Contacting parents before school starts is discouraged	5%

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- Resources—"funds and materials not available," "requires summer work"
- Family—"parents not interested," "parents can't read materials," and "dangerous to visit homes"
- Teachers—"I choose not to do it," and "takes too much time"

"Clearly, for the child to experience minimum discontinuity, the various settings must be in communication and some activities to prepare the child for the change must occur while the child is still spending the majority of his/her time in the more familiar preschool setting. Transition practices that occur after the beginning of school restrict the length of the transition period. Likewise, practices that are aimed at the entire class do not address the special needs of individual children and families," Early said.

"With such short notice, there is little continuity of environments and little opportunity to establish relationships that can help to head off some problems early in a child's schooling. We wait too long and do too little to connect children and families to school. I think this has consequences down the line," Pianta said.

Taylor said, "School administrators should consider earlier identification of new students and a formal transition practices plan. Given the importance of this period, teachers need extra assistance and support to facilitate transition. Also, more teachers should receive training in transitions.

"Consideration must be given to how barriers to transition practices are affected by family, school, and community context. A formal method of mapping and tracking teacher transition practices is needed in order to identify barriers and overcome them. Interventions that attend to the ecology of the transitions, and in particular, acknowledge the family's cultural background, may heighten children's competencies and improve the teacher-child fit so that children have a better chance to enter school 'ready to learn'," Taylor said.

Other results

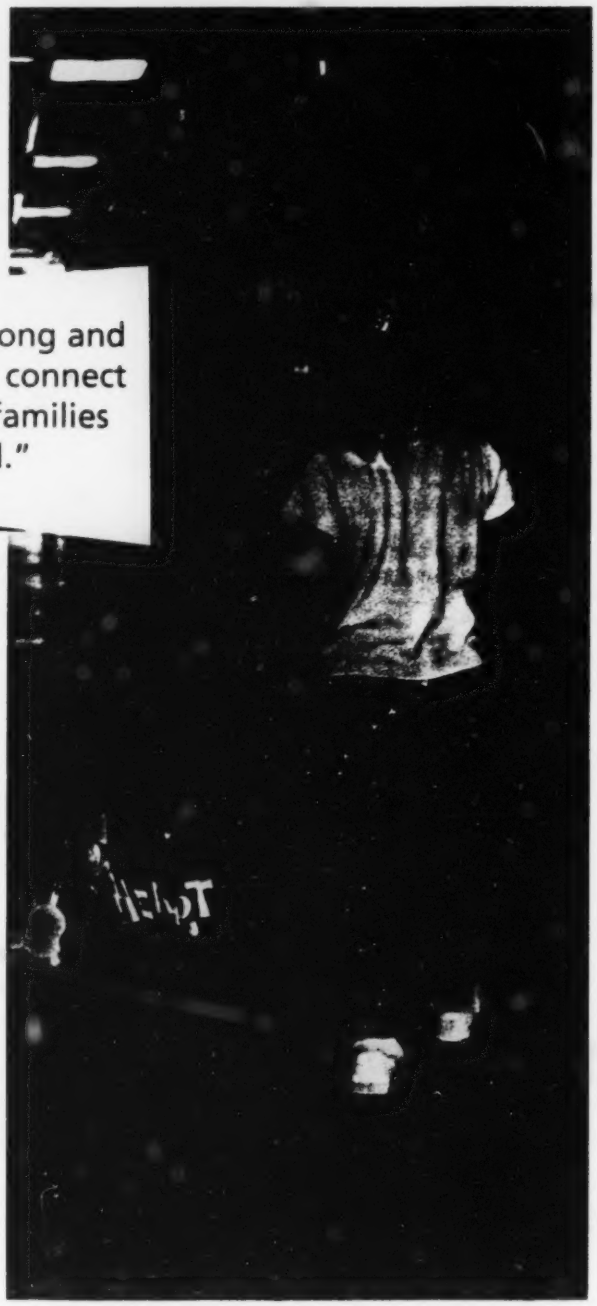
The survey also found that:

- 25 percent of membership in kindergarten classrooms changes during the course of the academic year.
- Kindergarten classrooms had an average of 22.2 students, with no significant differences between suburban and urban class sizes. The National Association for the Education of Young Children recommends that kindergartners be in classes no larger than 25 with two teachers. Survey data indicate that most teachers have a paid assistant at least some of the time.

These findings show that "we have a long way to go in ensuring that all children come to school ready to learn, and ensuring that schools make the necessary provisions to reach out to their families," Pianta said.

Cox cautioned that while this particular survey focused on teachers and classrooms, it is interactions in a larger context that are critical for a child's success during transition. "In addition to the individual child's readiness and the kindergarten teacher's role, the family, the education system, preschool programs, and the community, are all responsible for successful transitions," she said.

Martha Cox is a senior investigator at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center (FPG), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The National Center for Early Development & Learning is administratively housed at FPG.



"We wait too long and do too little to connect children and families to school."

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Go!
Moving into 1ST grade

The NCEDL Kindergarten Transitions Survey looked at the transition from kindergarten into first-grade and found that among the 11 transition practices listed, over half of the teachers (57 percent) report meeting regularly with first-grade teachers to discuss continuity in the curriculum between kindergarten and first grade. And over half of the teachers (56 percent) report arranging for their class to visit a first-grade class.

However, less than 25 percent of teachers say they attend meetings to plan general transition activities, send parents information on how placements in first grade are made, attend meetings to plan transitions for individual children, or plan transition activities for children with special needs.

Robert Pianta, co-director of the study, said the findings indicate that traditional child-focused transition practices such as having children visit a first-grade classroom or having a first-grade child visit the kindergarten classroom are used more widely than practices that involve the parents in decisions about who will be their child's first-grade teacher and what the expectations are for first grade. Teachers may be talking to teachers about transition, but teachers are not reaching parents about their children's transition into first grade, he said.

Karen La Paro of the University of Virginia, who helped with the survey analysis, said, "Again, we find this lack of connection between home and school and lack of focus on the individual child's transition to grade one."

Pianta said; "The implications of our findings are that children have little facilitated contact with their future first-grade teacher. Contact is even less frequent in schools with high minority representation and in schools in high poverty areas. The importance of success in first grade is not being realized through the use of kindergarten-to-first-grade transition practices."

Stepping up

Practices reflect transition training

TEACHER EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATION ARE, for the most part, unrelated to transition practice use; however, teachers who have received special transitions training use more transition practices, according to the NCEDL Kindergarten Transitions Survey.

Some 24 percent of teachers reported having had specialized training in transitions to kindergarten. Teachers with this specialized training, as compared with teachers without this training, use more of all types of transition strategies, and apparently see some value in approaching transitions from a variety of angles. Data indicates that more such training may be of value in encouraging more comprehensive transition practices.

"Kindergarten teachers in the United States on average, have many years of teaching experience at the kindergarten level and tend to be well-educated. Many have a master's degree. However, it is striking how few have any formal training or currently receive information about transition practices," said Robert Pianta, co-director of the study. "Our experience shows that when teachers become aware of possible transition activities, and barriers are eliminated, they respond by engaging in a range of transition practices."

Teacher characteristics

Education

- 47 percent of public school kindergarten teachers have a master's degree or higher.
- Significantly fewer teachers in rural areas than in urban or suburban areas hold a master's degree or higher.
- 78% of teachers had an elementary education certification that included kindergarten.

Experience

- Public school kindergarten teachers have an average of 11.5 years experience teaching kindergarten, an additional 1.1 years teaching below the kindergarten level, and 3.5 years above the kindergarten level.
- Teachers from schools in districts with the least poverty had significantly more kindergarten teaching experience than teachers from schools in middle-level poverty districts.

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reported having any kind of specialized training in transitions to kindergarten suggests that changes need to be made in our professional development systems. That there is little facilitated contact between parents and their child's future first-grade teacher bespeaks the need for changes in school systems and in family-school relationships. That schools serving vulnerable children are the least likely to have supportive transition practices means that directing resources to certain schools and communities is warranted.

The information provided in this issue calls into question our singular focus on the question, "Are young children ready for school?" Equal attention should be paid to the question, "Are schools ready for young children?" In addressing this latter point, our challenge as professionals is to ensure that our educational institutions act as formal supports, not formal obstacles, to a family's critical adaptation to transition events. Furthermore, it is important that all families, at the point of exit from the public school system, believe that educational systems are supportive and valued resources in their communities. Forging that confidence begins in early childhood.

Are we ready to teach

According to some researchers, the questi
ready to learn, but are we ready to teach

"States commonly use low third-grade reading scores to predict, among other things, how many students will drop out c school and how many will be incarcerated

— Naomi Karp, dire
National Institute on Early Childhood Development & Educa

WITH THAT STATEMENT among her comments, Naomi Karp helped open the "Transition to Kindergarten" synthesis conference held last year in Charlottesville, VA, by the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL).

The topic was well suited for its relevance to the first goal among the six "National Education Goals." As stated in 1991 by the National Education Goals Panel, that goal is "All children in America will start school ready to learn."

Administrators, policymakers, teachers, parents, and caregivers joined a dozen national transition experts in analyzing nine papers written for the conference. During large group discussions and then during small synthesis groups, participants examined each paper's implications for research, practice, personnel preparation, and policy.

Early on, several speakers took issue with the "ready to learn" goal. Craig Ramey, a psychology professor at the University of Alabama and former researcher at FPG, said, "It is a silly statement. It's a political statement. Whoever wrote it didn't know anything about child development."

Picking up the gauntlet, Samuel Meisels of the University of Michigan proposed that readiness is a process that occurs over time and is not complete by the first day of kindergarten. It is more than just knowledge of a few skills. "Readiness must be conceptualized as a broad construct that incorporates all aspects of a child's life that

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contribute directly to that child's ability to learn. Definitions of readiness must take into account the setting, context, and conditions under which the child acquires skills and is encouraged to learn. Assessments of readiness must, in consequence, incorporate data from the child, teacher, and the community into an overall evaluation."

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Meisels went ever further, suggesting that the national readiness goal should be restated this way: "By the year 2000 all children will have an opportunity to enhance their skills, knowledge, and abilities by participating in classrooms that are sensitive to community values, recognize individual differences, reinforce and extend children's strength, and assist them in overcoming their difficulties."

Part of the problem with defining standards and creating assessments is that children enter school from such a wide variety of backgrounds—preschools, child care centers, and homes. Thus, teachers are faced with the challenge of children and their families from a broad range of experiences, skills, dispositions, abilities, and commitments to education. Several speakers pointed out that standards for young children should cover a range of abilities and that teachers should recognize that not all children will reach them at the same pace.

Administrators and some parents seem to want tests, but what kind of tests? Robert Pianta of the University of Virginia and co-organizer of the conference said, "In the next 10 years, there will be increased emphasis on testing, such as minimum competency standards. Can we reliably test kids? Are our existing programs any good? Our notions of what's good for young children will collide with minimum competency standards by focusing on isolated skills instead of a more broad-based contextualized notion of skill development."

Ramey said he felt it is more important to test change, rather that specific skills. "We need to document children's rate of change, but not performance at a point in time."

But in documenting change, do you document the change of the child over time or the change in a child compared with change in other children? Someone suggested a goal of equal growth rates. But, said Fred Morrison of Loyola University, "Are equal growth rates enough? Don't we really want children to catch up?" Which prompted Jim Gallagher, NCEDL researcher, to ask, "Catch up to whom? The best students in the class? The class average?"

"Regardless of education level, ethnic background, or income level, parents want their children to be successful in school..."

—Sandra Christenson
University of Minnesota

Role of parents in transition

Sandra Christenson of the University of Minnesota said in her paper that studies show that parents would spend more time in activities with children if educators would give them more guidance. "Regardless of education level, ethnic background, or income level, parents want their children to be successful in school; however, they do not know how to assist their children," said Christenson.

There should be common goals among families, educators, and students. But not only does this add demands on already overworked teachers, it comes at a time when parents are beginning to relinquish control of their children to outsiders for the first time. This alone can add more anxiety and tension to a situation that is already creating stress for children and their parents, particularly those who are poor, said Martha Cox of the Frank Porter Graham Center and co-organizer of the conference along with Pianta.

Martha Moorehouse of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services raised the question of the purposes of parent involvement. "If parents know why they are involved, they're more likely to be more interested. We need more research about parent involvement during the school year and during the summer."

Doris Entwisle of the Johns Hopkins University said a study by her and Karl Alexander showed that in the summer poor children fall behind, while during the winter they do, on average, as well as their better-off classmates.

Pianta suggested, "Most parents would love to have a list of things that they could work on during the summer with their kids."

Influences on successful transitions

Ramey put forth his "Transition Conceptual" model with eight spheres of influence closely associated with successful transitions:

- Survival resources are adequate to meet the child's and family's needs.
- Good physical and mental health and health practices prevail.
- Individuals have a sense of security
- The child and family have a positive

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and realistic self-concept.

- Positive motivation, expectations, and values exist to do well in school.
- Individuals have good social support to facilitate the transition to school.
- The child and family have good communication, both among themselves and with those concerned with the transition to school.
- The child and family have those basic skills considered essential to do well, such as everyday living, social-emotional, school and academic, and job-related skills.

Ramey said, "It is vital that individual differences be studied vigorously—so that schools, communities, and families do not adopt a one-size-fits-all strategy when this may not be appropriate."

Part of the problem, wrote Gary Melton, Susan Limber, and Terri Teague, all of the University of South Carolina, in their paper "Changing Schools for Changing Families," is that many of the issues that surround the financing of school-linked services are really issues of priorities, authority, and control over resources. The authors suggested that with some creativity and thoughtfulness, and most importantly, with a strong administrative commitment, many existing funding streams can be redirected to school-based services and other family-school-community partnerships.

However, suppose the money spigot were turned on? "How do state/local boards decide to allocate money? Suppose we got all the resources. Where do we put the money?" questioned Pianta.

At least one speaker was leery of more government bureaucracy. Ramey said, "We have too many layers of bureaucracy. It's taken the incentives out. We're losing creativity. We're losing energy."

Gallagher reminded speakers that a weak therapeutic dose often does no good and can do more harm in the case of intervention and new programs. "It seems immoral to go along with a piece of cake instead of the whole cake. It's a non-therapeutic dose. You have an illness, and you are given an insufficient amount of medicine to recover. It's not the fault of the medicine; it's that a sufficient dose wasn't given. And if a program doesn't work because not enough money was invested, then the whole program can get a bad name."

Some speakers raised questions about the appropriateness of "advocacy." Ramey's answer was, "If we can't make public policy recommendations a legitimate part of our work, then we are part of the problem. We have become part of a conspiracy when we don't ask for enough money to provide sufficiently broad and in-depth programs."

Other themes and questions raised during the conference

- Teachers are facing tremendous pressures from parents, administrators, the calendar, and unruly students. Barbara Bowman of the Erikson Institute said, "The most frequent complaint I hear from teachers is that a class may have 4 or 5 children with problems and the teacher spends the entire time trying to control those 4 or 5."

- Questions were raised about the effectiveness of half-day child care programs versus whole-day programs. Several speakers said the research isn't conclusive, although they suggested that whole-day programs would minimize transitions during the day and let teachers get better acquainted with children and their families.

- One synthesis group suggested that college loans be forgiven for teachers who work in high-poverty areas.

- Another synthesis group suggested that professional development for teachers, administrators, and other school employees should include more information about the issue of transition.

- Moorehouse offered several avenues of research: "What does harm at the classroom level? We need to know more about curricula-based approaches and other approaches."

- Don Bailey, director of both FPG and NCEDL, said more understanding of the meaning and usefulness of the term 'risk' is needed. "Perhaps, we need broader categories of risk. More diversity? For example, does a poor quality preschool program create a risk factor? Should or can risk be assessed earlier? Is the transition itself the risk? Should we look at what it is about the transition that is the risk? For example, poor transitions can create risks for children in at least two ways: Children are at risk for perceiving that school is not a good place to be, and they are at risk for perceiving that one's self is not successful at school. Then, one question would be: How do we go about preventing risks in transitions?"

Papers prepared for this synthesis conference are being rewritten based on discussions at the conference, and additional synthesis information is being prepared for a book to be published by Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company.

Distilling the essence

Summaries of selected papers presented at the Kindergarten Transitions Synthesis Conference in Charlottesville, VA by NCEDL in early 1998.

Critical Issues for Families and Schools: Rights, Responsibilities, Resources, and Relationship

by Sandra L. Christenson (University of Minnesota)

- Families, educators, and students must think of their relationships differently, moving from thinking in terms of service delivery ("provider" and "client" or "professionals" and "target populations") to thinking of complementary efforts toward common goals.
- The clear demarcation between early intervention and K-12 education defies the notion of constructing sustaining relationships between families and schools to enhance children's development and learning. Not only is there evidence that children need to be prepared for school learning, but also K-12 education could benefit from aligning with the family support principles so characteristic of early intervention practices.
- A constructive, sustained relationship between families and schools is one way to increase social capital for children and youth, provided issues related to rights, responsibilities, and resources are understood.

Classroom Practices (Curriculum and Management)

by Barbara T. Bowman (Erikson Institute for Advanced Study in Child Development)

Bowman said that her interpretation of some research is that:

- Development is holistic and cannot be separated into independently formed and functioning domains.
- Children's inner-feeling states are as important as their behavior in determining social/emotional status.
- Normal development encompasses a broad range of behavior and the younger the child the broader the normal range.
- Early caretaking relationships presage later social/emotional status.
- Culture plays an important role in parents' election of child-rearing strategies, which in turn affect children's feeling states and social behavior.
- Adjustment or maturity is achieved through synchrony between the capabilities of the child and the demands of his social world.

Bowman offered five general comments on some efforts to improve young children's school achievement:

- Too much weight is placed on "risk factors" in making programmatic decisions.
- Too little weight is placed on understanding cultural differences and engaging parents and communities in the process of setting standards and determining school practices.
- Not enough attention has been directed to supporting children's emotional/social health, particularly in their relationships with their parents and teachers.
- Teachers need a great deal more training and support if they are to respond to the diversity of need pervasive among low-income families and communities.
- Society needs to make a greater commitment of resources to the education of low-income children.

The Role of Kindergarten in Promoting Educational Equity and Excellence

by Nicholas Zill (Westat, Inc.)

55% of kindergarten children attend part-day programs (National Household Education Surveys [NHES], 1996)

Most US parents with children in kindergarten believe the schools attended by their children are doing a reasonably good job of communicating with parents and providing opportunities for parental involvement in school. (NHES)

In general, public kindergartens could communicate more with parents and involve them more in school activities, compared to private kindergartens. (NHES)

The most frequently reported complaint from teachers is the child's attention span and ability to focus on schoolwork (i.e., "doesn't concentrate, doesn't pay attention for long"). This is reported for nearly one child in every four. (NHES)

Two other teacher criticisms that are common but slightly less frequent have to do with the child's approach to learning new skills and his or her academic progress. About 1 kindergarten child in 7 is said to "lack confidence in learning new things or taking part in new activities." An equivalent portion is described as "not learning up to his or her capabilities." (NHES)

Children from single-parent families get more negative reports from their kindergarten teachers than children from families in which both birth parents are present in the household. (NHES)

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Early Schooling and Social Stratification

by Doris R. Entwisle and Karl Alexander (Johns Hopkins University)

Poor children in the Beginning School Study (BSS by Entwisle and Alexander), on average, did as well or better than their economically better-off classmates when schools were open. Only during summer recess did poor children fall behind.

First-grade children in the "low socioeconomic status" (SES) schools, even though they gained as many points on standardized tests as better-off children, were given lower marks, held back more often, and in other ways rated less favorably by teachers than the high SES children. (BSS)

The early school placements of children that reflect social structure in the larger society (attending high- or low-SES elementary school, retention, special education) have long-term consequences.

Elementary schools are typically organized along lines of family and neighborhood SES, with the consequence that the socioeconomic status of elementary children differs markedly between schools.

National Center for Early Development & Learning

Children in the "low socioeconomic status" schools, even though they gained as many points on standardized tests as better-off children, were given lower marks

Assessing Readiness

by Samuel J. Meisels (University of Michigan)

When readiness is defined as an interaction reflecting a joint focus on the child's status and the characteristics of the educational setting, two conditions are critical for its assessment. There must be sustained opportunities for the interactions between teacher and child to occur. And these interactions must occur over time, rather than on a single occasion. Meisels said performance assessments (assessments of a child's ability to analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and interpret facts and ideas) should:

Be integrative, bringing together various skills into visible displays and demonstrations of behavior that occur during the context of instruction.

Emphasize top-level competence by asking children to show what they can do. Teachers should work with students to help them achieve their best possible work.

Encourage meta-cognition and the capacity to articulate as well as reflect on performance. Children should evaluate their own work, and reflect on their own progress rather than being passive recipients of instruction or compliant occupants of the classroom.

Be guided by developmental standards, embedded in the longitudinal character of the children's work and captured by the continuous program format of curriculum-embedded performance assessments.

Fundamental to the attainment of children's mastery and competence at the outset of school is the development of a sense of self that can only be developed over time and in interaction with trustworthy, caring adults.

Fundamental to the attainment of children's mastery...is the development of a sense of self

Changing Schools for Changing Families

by Gary B. Melton, Susan P. Limber, and Terri Teague of the Institute for Families in Society (University of South Carolina)

- "Parents and educators frequently seem like islands in the lives of children, surrounded by competing agendas, often without visible connections to one another." (Norman & Smith, 1997)
- The Institute for Families in Society envisions a transformation of schools, both as communities in themselves and as centers of the broader community. Guiding principals are these:
  - Help should be built into natural settings in the community.
  - The service system should be such that families need not define themselves as clients or patients to obtain help.
  - Fundamental community institutions (including but not limited to the schools) should be human environments for children and families, who themselves should feel they have a say in the programs of which they are part. They should be treated with respect.
  - Personal attention has particular significance at times of developmental transition. A "welcome wagon" for children and families who have recently moved into the attendance area—or simply have entered kindergarten — ought to be a feature of every elementary school.
- When teachers and administrators wait until a child in early grades misbehaves before contacting parents and then assume that parents have the skills to respond effectively or the abilities to maneuver through the service system to get assistance, they are often disappointed. Preschool interventions that focus on skill building for parents and attempt to connect parents with help are critically important.
- Schools cannot keep violence out by constructing higher walls or using sophisticated monitoring/alarm systems. They must build relationships among community members that promote peaceful interactions, mutual respect, and investment in the good of the community.

Children with Disabilities in Early Elementary Schools: Transitions and Practice Issues

by Mark Wolery (Frank Porter Graham Center)

- The transition from preschool programs to early elementary schools includes a number of challenges that can be addressed by
  - establishing interagency transition teams and policies.
  - addressing the staff needs of both the sending and receiving programs.
  - responding to families' concerns about the transition through a variety of strategies, and
  - preparing children for the receiving program.
- Issues related to teaching students with disabilities in early elementary classes include identification of legitimate outcomes—here F.F. Billingsley's (1977) three-part framework (promoting membership, social relationships, and competence) appears to be useful. Another issue focuses on parents of students with disabilities, and two points seem pertinent.
  - Despite available processes and procedures, parents do not appear to be integral parts of the Individualized Educational Plan.
  - Parents on average do not perceive being in a positive partnership with the schools.
- Understanding how to promote adoption of different practices and how to sustain positive family-school relationships are clear research priorities.
- Some evidence speaks to the supports teachers need in providing instruction to students with disabilities.

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Helping parents choose

Transitions for fragile X children pose challenges for both families and schools

THE TRANSITION OF CHILDREN with disabilities into preschool and kindergarten poses many problems, and studies by FPG researchers are throwing a new light on issues facing children with fragile X syndrome. Fragile X syndrome is the most common inherited cause of developmental disability, affecting as many as one in 2,500 people. It is caused by a gene mutation on the X chromosome. Since 1993, FPG has been following selected young children with fragile X syndrome in Virginia and the Carolinas. Children in these two studies are now moving into kindergarten and first grade. Researchers Don Bailey and Deborah Hatton say that while most parents are pleased with the transition from preschool programs to kindergarten and from kindergarten to first grade, such transitions can create anxiety.

Hatton said, "The transition into kindergarten, particularly, can be an intense experience because many times the parents have not had much experience with school services for children with disabilities. If they have, it may have been years ago when special education services were very different than today. Parents are really concerned about labels their children will receive, their placement options, what support services are available, and opportunities for inclusion. "Our early findings show that placement in classes is driven more by the resources that school systems have, rather than the goals in the Individualized Education Plans," she said.

Bailey said, "One of the questions we asked parents was, 'Did your children go into a special class and, if so, what kind?' This turned out to be very interesting. Some parents shop around and look at classes that they think their child would best fit in, and then they try to get the child labeled for whatever it takes to get their child into that class. For example, parents might look at a class for autism and say, 'I think this would be best for our child,' and so then they work to get their child labeled autistic."

Because children with fragile X exhibit a number of problems and because fragile X is not an eligibility category for receiving services, such children are given different labels, depending in part on the resources of the schools and in part on the desires of the parents.

Bailey said, "One fascinating thing we're finding is that there can be a number of kids with the same disorder and yet they are labeled differently. Fragile X syndrome is not an eligibility category for schools. You have to fit into a more general category, such as mentally retarded or autistic."

Hatton said, "Most of these children were served in early intervention programs at the preschool level with the label of developmental delay. A very few had the label of mental retardation. But then when they get to kindergarten and first grade, these labels start diverging a lot. And this can lead to problems. With fragile X syndrome, the majority may be mentally retarded, but if you're teaching them, that is the least of your problems. For a teacher, the problems are attention issues and hyperactivity disorders."

Bailey said another major issue coming to light in these early findings is inclusion. "There is the question of whether the parents want their child to be with normal children or in special services. While many parents want inclusion, there are characteristics of regular classes that make these classes very distractible for children with fragile X—noise, lots of activity, lots of choices. This is a very difficult setting for many children with fragile X. The environment is a challenge. As it turns out, a majority of parents end up choosing self-contained classrooms."

Hatton said, "We're finding out that even parents who want inclusion see that while it might work in preschool and kindergarten, it gets more difficult by the first grade. And by the second grade, virtually all the parents are requesting specialized services, even those who had been very adamant about inclusion." State and local schools' rules and traditions also make a difference. Bailey said, "An autism class in Virginia may be very different from an autism class in NC. Thus, a child labeled autistic in Fayetteville, NC, might receive different services in Roanoke, VA. In some schools, you don't have to be labeled autistic, for example, to be served in a class for autistic children."

Bailey and Hatton say they expect policy implications to emerge from these studies. "If our findings continue supporting these early indications, there will be a need for a re-examination of how we describe children, how we determine eligibility, and how we allocate services. We need to answer questions about how school systems label children and how these labels correspond to services. Labels often don't give you any idea of what ought to be done in the classroom."

The researchers are also collecting some data from practitioners. "How to structure the classroom and school environment will be of help to practitioners," said Bailey.

Overall, the early data indicate that most parents were very pleased with the transition from infant intervention programs to preschool. "It seems like there is a lot of support during this transition period. Basically, parents said the transition went well and that they were pleased with the services and the assessments. We asked, 'What would you have changed?' and the most common answer was 'more therapies as part of the support services'," said Hatton.

"For a teacher, the problems are attention issues and hyperactivity disorders."

Parents are being interviewed at least once a year and the researchers are also examining school records and individualized family plans to ascertain services received, what children are labeled, and so forth. Both studies are financed by the U.S. Department of Education.

Recent publications

by researchers at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center

Family outcomes in early intervention: A framework for program evaluation and efficacy research
D. Bailey Jr., R. McWilliam, L. Darkes, K. Hebbler, R. Simeonsson, D. Spiker, & M. Wagner. (1998). *Exceptional Children, 64*. 313–328.

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Social and family risk factors for infant development at one year: An application of the cumulative risk model
S. Hooper, M. Burchinal, J. Roberts, S. Zeisel, & E. Neebe. (1998). *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 19*(1), 85–96.

Creating risk and promise: Children's and teachers' co-constructions in the cultural world of kindergarten
D. Skinner, D. Bryant, J. Coffman, & E. Campbell. (1998). *Elementary School Journal, 98*(4), 297–310.

Selves in time and place: Identities, experience, and history in Nepal
D. Skinner, A. Pach III, & D. Holland (Eds.). (1998). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

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Who's in charge?
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Resources within reason: Materials for supporting th communication development of young children
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Preserving childhood for children in shelters
T. Harms, R. Richardson, & P. Roland (1998). Washington, DC: CWLA Press.

Inclusion of young children with special needs in early childhood education: The research base
S. Odom & K. Diamond. (1998). *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 13*(1), 3–26.

Improving quality in early childhood environments through on-site consultation
S. Palsha & P. Wesley. (1998). *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education 18*(4), 243–253.

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Research spotlight

Recent findings at FPG

Creating Risk and Promise: Children's and Teachers' Co-constructions in the Cultural World of Kindergarten

Debra Skinner, Donna Bryant, Jennifer Coffman, & Frances Campbell. (1998).
***The Elementary School Journal, 98*(4), pp. 297–310.**

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY was to try to understand how kindergarten teachers begin to view and interact with students from low-income families as these children first enter kindergarten. How do some children come to be identified as "at-risk" and others as having promise? How do teachers' language and classroom practices affect the child and what behaviors of the children most influence the teachers' beliefs and practices?

This work fits into a larger body of research on "cultural production." Cultural production theory, as applied to school achievement, views students as affected by their homes, the society in which they are being raised, and their teachers, but also views students as actively shaping teachers' notions about themselves and their own school success or failure. Relationships were studied by observing 21 former Head Start children in their kindergarten year in 14 different classrooms. Researchers collected extensive information about each child and each classroom.

They found many examples of positive interactions between students and teachers, but also observed some practices that could contribute to early school failure. Teacher practices that worked best for minority children from low-income families included communicating high expectations, emphasizing what children could do rather that what they couldn't, praising children frequently, redirecting inappropriate behavior, and conveying a caring attitude. These behaviors undoubtedly help children from all walks of life, although the focus in this study was on children from poor families.

The study showed that ideas like competence, readiness, risk, and promise are not characteristics inherent in the child, but are notions created in and across a variety of contexts, including home, school, and the larger society. The points at which schools contribute to the children's understandings of themselves as good or bad students and the ways in which school practices work to foster success or failure are areas that need to be examined to create promise instead of risk.

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SUPPORTING FAMILY HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center

Developments

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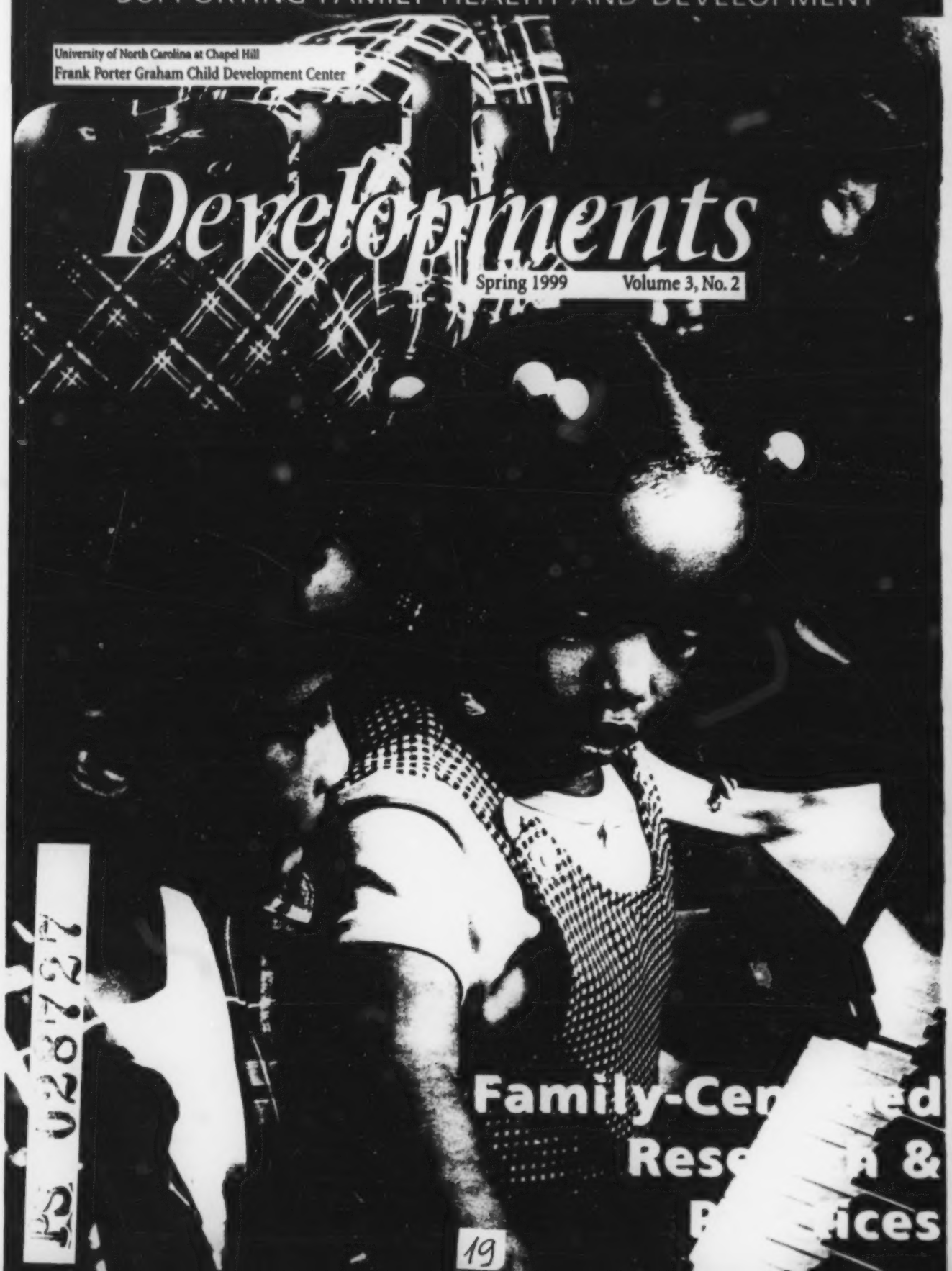

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FOCUS ON FAMILIES—cultural diversity is expanding intervention and early education practices, *page 6*

I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT!—marital disagreements and infant interaction, *page 8*

PUTTING PARENTS IN THE PICTURE—increasing family involvement in early education and intervention, *page 10*

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From the director's office

The big picture

MOST YOUNG CHILDREN in America today are raised in some sort of family. However, there is enormous variation in the nature of the American family—who is in it, where they live, their financial resources, their values and ways of interacting with each other. Understanding the development of young children cannot be studied apart from understanding the families in which they live.

We know quite a bit about the importance of the family's role in children's social development and on their success in school. Early relationships with parents and siblings form the basis for later social development with peers and teachers. Language use in the home and the variety of experiences families provide for their children shape later language and cognitive competence of children. Attitudes about school, work, and whether effort can make a difference in one's life are transmitted very early to children and their effects are evident in children's participation in school.

This issue of *Early Developments* highlights some of the work on families being conducted at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center. Some of our research is devoted to understanding families better and how they influence their children. We are interested in how families respond when they have a child with a chronic illness or disability, and how cultural background influences those responses. We are studying early childhood, early intervention and early elementary school programs to find out how "family-friendly" those programs are. Finally, a number of investigators have developed and are testing strategies for helping programs be more supportive of families in the context of parenting roles.

So, although we call ourselves a child development center, that inevitably means a focus on families as well. Hopefully this work will lead to a better understanding of families in today's society and how agencies, schools, and programs can be more responsive to the wide variation in family needs, parenting styles, and goals for their children.

—Don Bailey

Bailey is director of the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center and holds academic appointments in both the School of Education and the School of Medicine at UNC-Chapel Hill.

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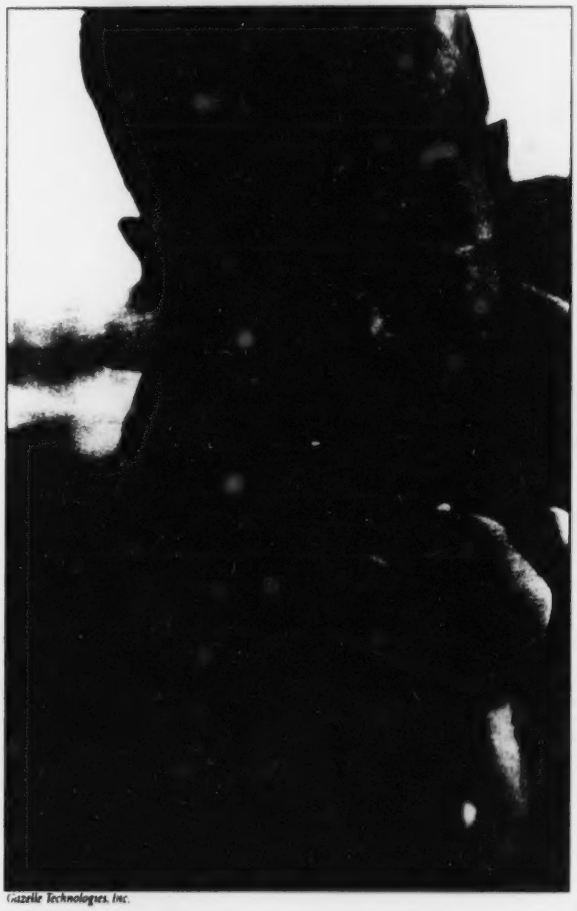
New research examines the intentionality of infants and their parents' perception of it

Why do they do that?

HOW A FAMILY INTERACTS during its very earliest formation is the focus of new research by two fellows at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center. Steve Reznick and Barbara Goldman are studying parent perception of infant behavior that seems intentional and how this perception affects parent-child interaction. Byproducts already include a new series of measuring tools, and may include a way to screen parents in cases of child neglect or abuse as well as suggestions on intervention in cases of risk to infants.



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A study that Reznick began at Yale University is still underway, and depending on the results may be replicated at FPG. He had been at Yale for 10 years before joining the UNC-CH psychology department last year. Barbara Goldman, who is also in the psychology department, has worked on a number of studies involving children over the years.

The two are beginning a study funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development to pinpoint cognitive changes in infants during the first year. "I believe the data support the idea that there is a change somewhere between 4-6 months," Reznick explains. "This change in the infant's cognitive ability can be viewed from two perspectives."

From the infant's perspective, the world changes such that it has a past and a future. The infant recalls things that have occurred previously, and that same ability allows the infant to extrapolate into the future, to predict what's going to happen, to form expectations. For example, a six-month-old hears footsteps in the hall and smiles wider and its father sticks his head into crib. Before that age, the infant would recognize the footsteps but wouldn't necessarily go the next step and expect a particular face to appear.

From the parents' perspective, it is when these changes begin taking place that infants become capable of what parents call goal-directed behavior and capable of expressing their desires explicitly and acknowledging when their desires have been met or not met. Parents begin to perceive that an infant is doing something on purpose.

Study at Yale

Reznick's study at Yale, funded by the W.T. Grant Foundation, is looking at several issues. Whether early signs of infant memory-based behavior presage early emerging sophistication of thinking skills is one. Another is what difference the parents' perception of intentionality makes. One difference may be in how parents provide a framework or scaffolding to let children find their way into an interactive world. The reasonable bet, Reznick says, is that it's important that parents provide scaffolding but individual differences in the normal range aren't that significant.

Because parents are interviewed and tested repeatedly during these studies, a natural question is, "Does interaction with the researchers and their tests change how parents perceive intentionality?" Numerous measures and cross-measures are used to check this. "If you take mothers who are being tested for the first, second and third times, mothers taking the test for the third time see more intentionality. Perhaps our interviews raised their consciousness. On the other hand, if we want to intervene, then we already have a clue that we can do that successfully," Reznick adds.

Measuring tools

Over the years, Reznick and graduate students working with him have developed a number of measuring tools. "We do straightforward things such as interviewing parents about what they believe. Also, we have a tape with 25 snippets of infant behavior between 6-12 months. For example, a ball falls from an infant's hand. One parent may say that the baby intentionally threw the ball, while another

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parent looking at exactly the same tape will say that the ball dropped and give the child no credit. In another technique, we show each parent a videotape of a baby and ask each parent to narrate what the baby is doing. The parent's language can betray an attitude of intentionality or an attitude of less intentionality," he explains.

The other side of measuring is, can one say definitively that a baby does something deliberately?

The other side of measuring is, can one say definitively that a baby does something deliberately? "It's a remarkably important distinction in our culture. It's the difference between murder and manslaughter, pardoning someone and not pardoning him or her. With babies, we determine what kinds of behavior that parents regard as intentional, and we set up situations where babies have the opportunity to perform those behaviors," Reznick says.

"For example, we tie a string to a toy and the child pulls the string and the toy moves. Then we remove the string without the child realizing it and see if the child persists in trying to move the toy. We play peekaboo with a child and see how the child responds and whether the child will initiate the game. We have 14-15 of these procedures, and we put children through these, which are opportunities to behave intentionally. We feel this is the first battery of tests that is an explicit measure of this construct," he says.

Reznick and Goldman began pilot testing of infants in late 1998 for the new NICHD study of cognition. One aspect of that study is measuring where babies are looking. In the past, this was done by frame-by-frame analysis of videotape, which was tedious, slow and not particularly accurate. They are now using a new procedure involving a video camera that follows the movement of an infant's eyes. Most of the study is being carried out in the FPG Observational Methods Unit.

Reznick is cautious about over-interpreting the significance of when a child becomes intentional and the parental response. "You have to distinguish behavior inside and outside a normal range. We run the risk of leading people to assume that doing more will make a difference. That's not necessarily what the data would let us say. This is a very sensitive topic because some parents are so eager to do the very best for their child, and if they read a research paper that says you can get infants to learn words faster if you present information in a certain way, then some parents will feel that if they're not presenting it in that way, they are harming their child. I have no reason to believe that is the case."

If you want to know more

Reznick, J.S., & Feldman, R. (1996). Maternal perception of infant intentionality at 4 and 8 months. *Infant Behavior and Development (19)*, 483–496.

Research by Steven Reznick and Barbara Goldman on parent perception of infant intentionality may have significant policy and practice implications.

"What has attracted interest to this topic and what makes it salient to people interested in policy is that extremes of parent perception could be extremely important," Reznick says.

At one extreme are parents who dramatically underperceive infant intentionality. If you don't think of a baby as doing things on purpose, then there's no reason to read, to play, to interact with them. What's the point in telling these parents to read to their children? It's like telling them to read to their plants. At this extreme, a parent may use underperception of intentionality to justify child neglect.

At the other extreme are parents who overstate infant intentionality. They believe babies do things on purpose that most people would believe was not on purpose. These parents are particularly willing to make that attribution concerning negative behaviors. Reznick gave examples: "She soiled her diaper because she knew I was in a hurry," or "She's crying now to get the upper hand." If a parent believes a 6-month-old is capable of such distinct intentional behavior, then that can be license to forms of punishment that most in our culture regard as abuse. "Indeed, if you interview parents who have abused infants, the language they use is one of punishment, and we believe that this extreme overt view of intentionality may be dangerous," Reznick says.

If their studies support these observations, Reznick and Goldman may discover ways to help parents get a sense of how they view an infant's behavior. "Furthermore, if we want to intervene and reduce a child's risk, our work is revealing how you might go about doing that," says Reznick.

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FOCUS ON FAMILIES

In many FPG projects cultural diversity is expanding early education and intervention practices

GETTING A BETTER UNDERSTANDING of how Latino families view and use services for young children with disabilities is but one of a number of studies at FPG involving the center's commitment to increasing our knowledge of families. For example, one study is studying family literacy programs, while another is looking at how researchers can better ensure that families understand what "consent" means when helping researchers. Transition considerations for families with fragile X children are being examined, and several research instruments concerning families are being translated into Spanish.

Updates on these projects

Regarding services, findings indicate that only 39% of 200 Latino parents of young children with disabilities were "mostly" or "very satisfied" with services for their children. This finding was lower than found in several previous studies.

Don Bailey, one of the study investigators, said that an interesting inverse relationship was found between satisfaction and awareness as well as use of services. For both mothers and fathers, greater awareness and use of services was associated with greater dissatisfaction. A potential explanation is that those who actively seek out and use services have higher expectations for the service system and thus are likely to be less satisfied than those who have lower expectations.

OTHER FINDINGS

- Mothers (but not fathers) of children with more severe delays and older children reported less satisfaction with services. The fact that this relationship was not found for fathers likely reflects the greater awareness and use of services by mothers and the fathers' frequent allocation of decision making with respect to services to the mother.

- Dissatisfaction is more likely to occur when the program characteristics do not match the needs of the family, as in the case where a Spanish-speaking family does not have access to materials in Spanish or a translator, or when service providers are perceived to be non-accepting or unwilling to be helpful.

- Researchers found very little pursuit of alternative treatments, such as the use of folk medicines or practices that seem exotic to western medicine.

Bailey reports several implications for practice have emerged so far.

- Families of Puerto Rican and Mexican heritage vary widely in terms of awareness, use, and satisfaction with services, and the family characteristics commonly believed to influence these outcomes generally did not seem to be related. Professionals should be careful to not draw general conclusions about Latino families; thus, again, emphasizing the need for an individualized approach.

- Clearly for some families, providing written materials in Spanish or a translator would be of both functional help as well as send an important message about the program's willingness to be responsive to individual differences.

- Although it is critical to understand the history, traditions, and values of various cultures, "it is probably a disservice and a misrepresentation to assume that members of immigrant groups do not subscribe to what we consider a modern approach to services," said Bailey.

Others working with Bailey are Debra Skinner and Patricia Rodriquez at FPG, and Vivian Correa at the University of Florida.

Helping parents understand research

One important barrier to obtaining informed consent while enrolling people in studies is a lack of true comprehension of what a given study involves. Most consent forms used by researchers to get permission from those participating in research are at a college reading level. Parents who have limited reading are especially vulnerable in this situation. With that in mind, a team head by FPG researcher Frances Campbell is examining better ways to explain research procedures to parents when seeking their permission.

Working with parents representing a range of literacy levels, the team is evaluating how information is comprehended when it is presented in four ways.

1 A traditional printed consent form
2 A graphically enhanced consent form
3 A video-enhanced consent procedure
4 A procedure in which the parent interacts with a computer using a video and a touch screen

Parents will be recruited for a hypothetical study and assigned to one of the above consent procedures. The research capitalizes on FPG's expertise in research involving children and vulnerable populations, such as low-income families. Other researchers working with Campbell are Barbara Goldman and Maria L. Boccia.

Fragile X children

Fragile X syndrome is the most common inherited cause of developmental disability, affecting as many as one in 2,500 people. Since 1993, FPG has been following selected young children with fragile X syndrome in Virginia and the Carolinas.

Children in these two studies are now moving into kindergarten and first grade. Researchers Don Bailey and Deborah Hatton say that while most parents are pleased with the transition from preschool programs to kindergarten and from kindergarten to first grade, such transitions can create anxiety.

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OTHER EARLY FINDINGS

- Placement in classes is driven more by the resources of school systems rather than the goals in the Individualized Education Plans.
- Some parents shop around and look at classes that they think would be best for their child, and then they try to secure the label necessary for getting the child into that class.
- Fragile X is not an eligibility category for receiving services, and so children are given different labels, depending in part on schools' resources and eligibility requirements and in part on the desires of the parents.
- While most fragile X children may be mentally retarded, that label can be misleading for teachers. In many cases, teachers find attention and hyperactivity disorders and behavior problems more of a challenge than mental retardation.
- By the second grade, virtually all parents of fragile X children request specialized services, even those who had been adamant about inclusion in preschool and kindergarten.

Translating instruments

Researchers Syndee Kraus and Robin McWilliam are translating two broad-based questionnaires (*Brass Tacks: The Family Report* and *Children's Engagement Questionnaire*) into Spanish and will test and disseminate them so that early intervention specialists can do a better job capturing the "voice" of Latino families who receive these services.

Brass Tracks measures the family's perceptions of services they are receiving and wha is important to them. *The Children's Questionnaire* measures the family perceptions of their children's persistence, social behavior, and attentiveness.

"We want to ensure that our practices with these families and their children are based on first-hand perceptions rather than making assumptions based on previously gathered research data from members of other cultures," says McWilliam.

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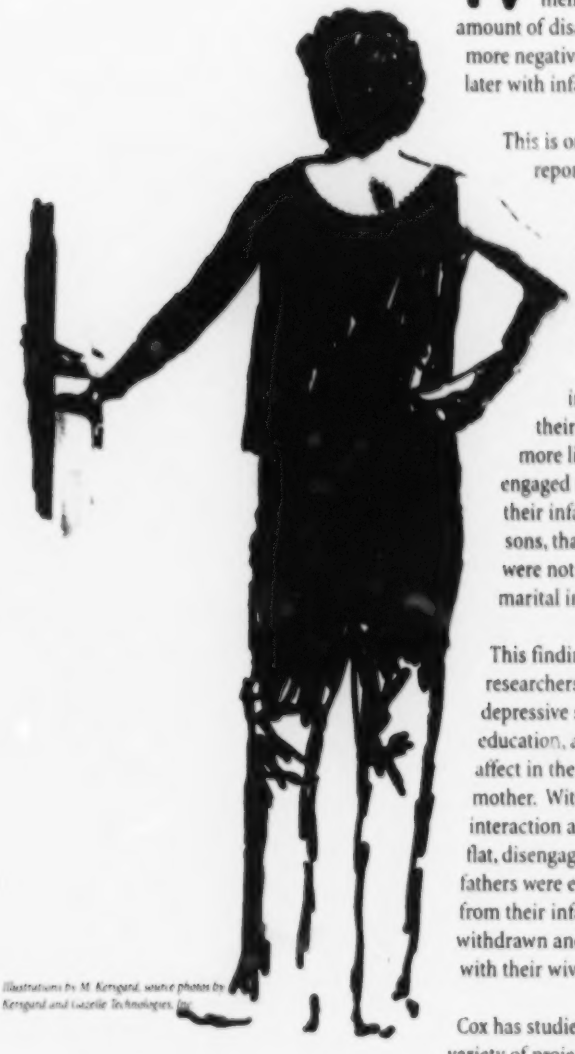

Illustrations by M. Kerrigard, source photos by Kerrigard and Lucille Technologies, Inc.

How wives handle marital disagreements may indicate how they interact with infants

WITHDRAWAL FROM A PARTNER during a marital disagreement, rather than the amount of disagreement, predicts more negative interactions months later with infants.

This is one of the findings reported in a longitudinal study of the transition to parenthood headed by Martha Cox, a researcher at the Frank Porter Graham Center. Cox says women who were more withdrawn in their interactions with their husbands were later more likely to be flat and disengaged in interactions with their infants, especially with sons, than were women who were not withdrawn during marital interactions.

This finding occurred even after researchers controlled for mothers' depressive symptoms, mothers' education, and the child's negative affect in the interaction with the mother. Withdrawal in the marital interaction also predicted fathers' flat, disengaged parenting, but fathers were especially disengaged from their infants when they were withdrawn and angry in interaction with their wives.

Cox has studied families through a variety of projects over the years at FPG, and some of her work is included in *Causes and Consequences*, a book just published by Lawrence Erlbaum & Associates. Cox and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn of Columbia University are editors of the book.

"We need to understand more about when conflict and tension in the marital relationship spill over into other family relationships," notes Cox. "It is clear that the avoidance of conflict that accompanies withdrawn marital behavior can be as detrimental to parent-child relationships as angry arguing." She said other studies show avoidance of conflict, particularly in the form of withdrawal from interaction, is a marker of poor marital relationships.

Constructive conflict

Indeed, conflict may be constructive in some marital relationships. Conflict can highlight the individual differences, needs, desires, and goals of each partner. Ideally, making those individual needs an understood part of the couple's dialogue and planning would let the marriage stay close and the partners connected.

Conflict between marital partners may be necessary to stimulate the adjustments needed to keep a marriage intimate and satisfying. Furthermore, constructive conflict may provide children with models of effective strategies for conflict resolution. Cox said that this quality of marriage has not been sufficiently explored.

There is also the growing recognition of the need for a more complex understanding of the association between conflict in marital relationships and children's adaptation. Conflict, whether marital or parent-child or sibling, is a fact of family life, and it may have constructive as well as destructive effects on the development of children.

Spillover of tensions

For distressed couples (those who scored as distressed on screening instruments and desired treatment for their difficulties) as compared to nondistressed couples, one study found there was greater continuity of marital tensions from one day to the next and greater "spillover" of tensions from the marital relationship to the parent-child relationship. "It may be," observed Cox, "that the ongoing tension in the marital relationship and the failure to resolve conflicts, rather than the frequency of conflict or negative affect is most detrimental to parenting."

Another thread running through this book is that development is seen as occurring in

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the context of relationships. Thus, the way healthy or disturbed relationships are defined for children in families must take into account the way that the relationships serve a child with respect to critical developmental issues. For example, cohesive parent-child relationships are important in fostering the collaboration needed for good parental supervision of young adolescents. Supervision as an aspect of parenting in adolescence is a key to preventing delinquent behavior.

Parents who are emotion-coaching are more likely to be in marriages in which the couple believes in discussing emotional issues and that marital conflict is worth the struggle. The willingness to tolerate and accept some negative affect in family relationships may be an important common element associated with good outcomes for family members.

Relationships

An overarching theme of the book, and indeed most of Cox's research, is that individual development needs to be understood in the context of relationships in the family. In line with that, another portion of the book theorizes that changes in parent-adolescent relations derive not only from biological and cognitive changes in the adolescent which result in increases in conflict (overt hostility and negative affects) and decreases in cohesion (observable warmth and support) in parent-child relationships, but also from the social interactional histories of parents and adolescents.

One study shows even greater hostility among adolescent girls toward their parents than among boys, reflecting perhaps the more rapid pubertal and social development of girls during that age. The findings also showed that parents and children who were higher on warmth and support at an earlier time increase their emotional closeness over time, while those who were low on warmth and supportiveness showed declines over time.

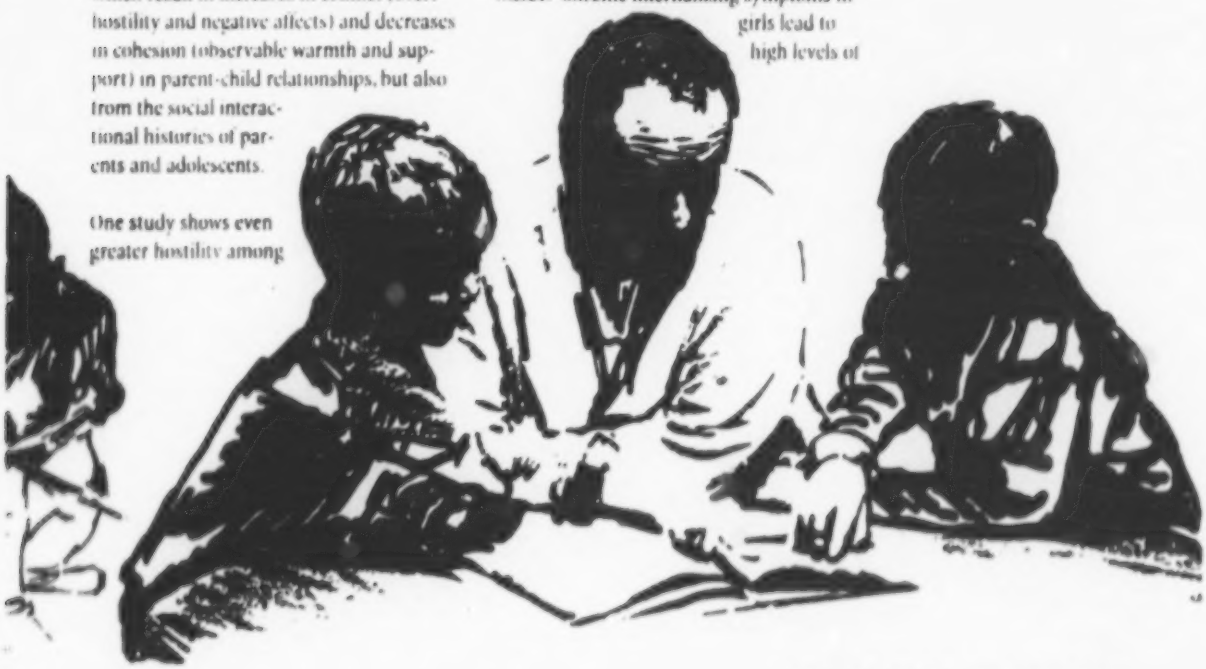
A 1995 study showed that closeness and conflict coexist in most families, and consequently, the balance between the two may be important for the adolescent daughter's development. Mother-daughter relationships do change at the time of puberty.

The patterns have long-term implications. For example, in one sample, a pregnancy during the daughters' college years was predicted by lower family cohesion, more family conflict, and a more controlling environment than for girls who did not become pregnant as early as the college years. Interestingly, it was conflict with fathers that predicted the early pregnancy, rather than conflict with mothers.

In another study reported in this book, mothers and daughters show difficulties in negotiating autonomy when daughters have a high degree of symptoms that are kept inside. Chronic internalizing symptoms in girls lead to high levels of both conflict and submission. And conflict and submission together are a behavioral combination unlikely to lead to success in negotiating more autonomous relations with mothers.

One study of mothers and daughters supports the idea that it is developmentally important for mothers of adolescent girls to tolerate a moderate degree of conflict. Again, noted Cox, tolerance for a certain amount of negative emotion in family relationships may be important for healthy outcomes.

Cox said that "while a fair amount is known about how families fail under conditions of severe or pervasive adversity, little is known about the many families whose children show successful adaptation, positive functioning, and competence despite conditions of adversity. We know little about families that successfully negotiate risk conditions, although we know that many of these families exist." ED



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Putting in the

Projects aim family involvement and inte

TWO OF THE NEWEST PROJECTS at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center and the National Center for Early Development & Learning are creating models to increase family involvement and empowerment in early childhood arenas.

THE PARENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROJECT is developing a cadre of parents to fill a variety of advocacy and advisory roles with state and local agencies and organizations.

THE COMMUNITY-BASED MODEL FOR IMPROVING EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTICES AND POLICIES PROJECT will integrate parents into the planning process of local Smart Start partnerships in North Carolina.

Both projects build on a growing body of research showing the efficacy of involving parents and other family members in all aspects of planning, delivering, and evaluating early education and intervention services. "Developing strong parent-professional alliances is a critical first step in improving the quality and cultural responsiveness of services to children and families," explains FPG Researcher Pat Wesley, co-principal investigator of the Parent Leadership project.

Here's a closer look at these two projects, each of which is developing a model that can be replicated by local communities, agencies, and education partnerships.

Parent Leadership

Comprehensive, high-quality, individualized early care and intervention for children with disabilities now require simultaneous attention to child development, community building, professional development, and family involvement. Virginia Buysse, another FPG researcher and co-principal investigator of the Parent Leadership Development Project, says, "Families should be considered essential advisors in public policy, research, personnel preparation, and program development, as well partners is all aspects of their children's care and education."

The Parent Leadership project is recruiting 72 parents and other family members of children with disabilities interested in developing or improving partnerships with professionals. These parents will receive intensive training, including follow-up activities to develop leadership skills. This cadre will then be linked to institutions of higher learning and organizations and agencies providing early education, early intervention, and family support services.

Although many professionals recognize the value of having families serve as consultants, advisors, and members of boards and committees, there are a number of barriers.

- Logistical problems such as lack of transportation or difficulty in making child care arrangements and balancing family needs
- Administrative constraints
- Lack of money for parent reimbursement
- Parent's lack of knowledge or experience with leadership roles
- Limited opportunities and support for parents in these positions
- Inadequate representation of the full spectrum of families who participate in early intervention

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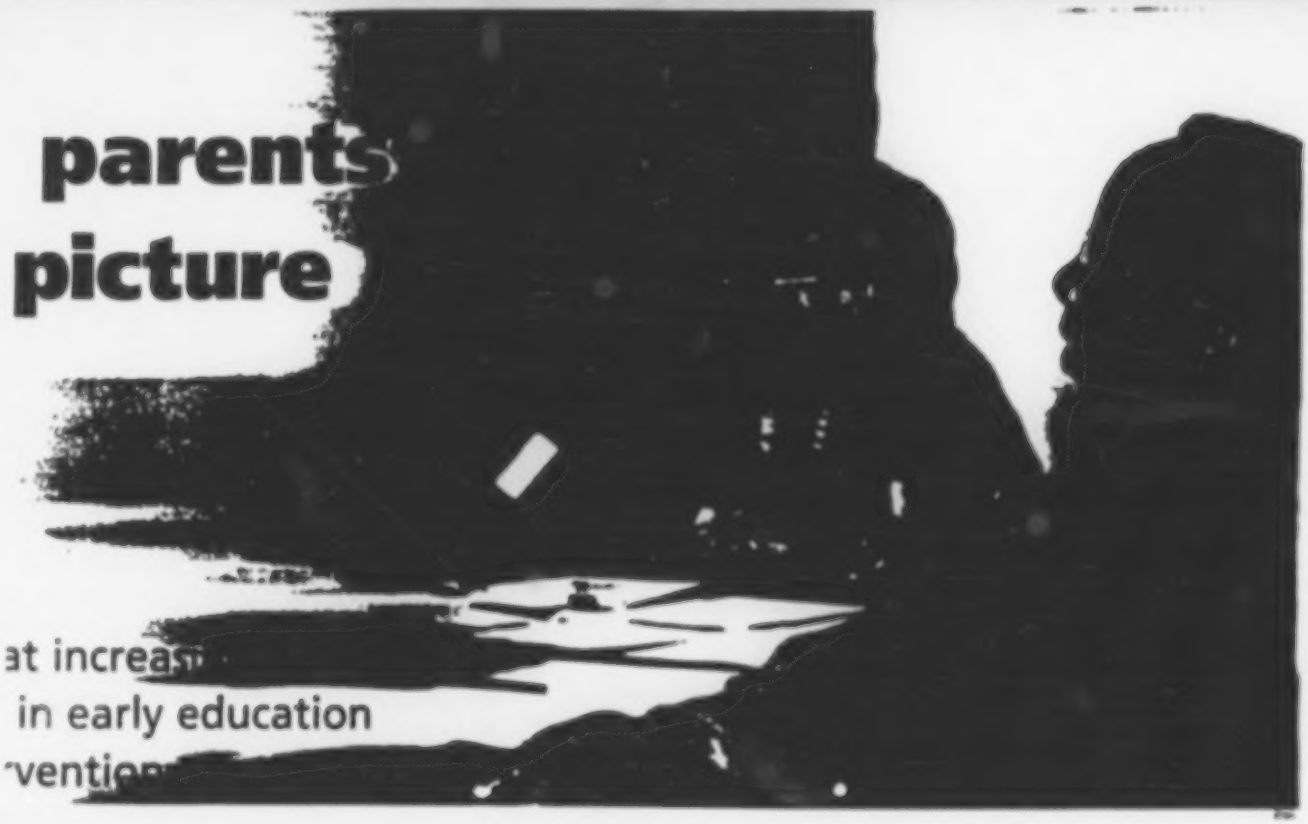
parents picture



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in early education
vention

"Our assumption is that most early intervention professionals already understand the importance of collaborating with families, but lack effective strategies for putting this philosophy into practice," explains Wesley. Project participants will represent diversity of culture, language, family constellations (single parents, teenage parents, foster parents, grandparents) and socioeconomic resources.

OTHER FEATURES OF THE MODEL

- A series of leadership retreats for parents focusing on information about early care and intervention systems to increase parent leadership skills
- Follow-up activities with parents as they implement action plans to expand their partnerships with professionals and develop individual portfolios
- Production of a *Parent Leadership Directory*, a *Facilitator's Guide to Parent Leadership Development*, and a videotape about parent leadership roles
- Helping professional organizations, programs, and agencies across North Carolina meet their goals to increase parent representation and involvement
- A comprehensive program evaluation and dissemination of findings to a wide audience

The Parent Leadership project is funded for 3 years by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

Model to aid Smart Start

The Community-Based Model for Improving Early Childhood Practices and Policies is aimed at developing specific guidelines, tools, and strategies for involving families in reforming early childhood policies and practices. Specifically, the study will work with the NC Partnership for Children, which oversees a statewide childhood initiative known as "Smart Start." Smart Start is a public-private initiative and is not just one program; it's many. Local Smart Start partnerships of parents, educators, child care providers, nonprofits, churches, and business people plan how to improve (or provide, in some cases) local child care, health care, and family services to children under the age of six. (See related story on page 15.)

Pam Winton, director of the project, says that Smart Start evaluation studies have shown that a particular challenge for communities is implementing the state requirement that families be involved in the planning process. "People know it's important, but it's really hard and because of that sometimes they give up. An immediate need is the development of a technical assistance model, and that's what we're doing. The involvement of families is based on the assumption that families have unique perspectives about gaps in systems and solutions that are likely to work. Without these perspectives, it is felt that plans likely will promote the status quo," she explained.

PROMOTING INVOLVEMENT

Researchers have posed these questions:

- What are strategies for meaningfully involving families in decision-making?
- What are strategies for providing current, relevant early childhood research data to stakeholder groups, including families?

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- What processes lead to shared knowledge and values among different stakeholder groups, including families?
- What are strategies to meaningfully identify the needs of families and children in ways that lead to realistic plans for change?
- How can family involvement in making improvements in early childhood programs and policies be monitored and evaluated?

A participatory evaluation approach is based on the needs and perspectives of the NC Partnership for Children and local Smart Start participants, including families. The study is in two phases. During Phase 1, which is taking place now, information is being gathered about ways to involve families and the effectiveness of those strategies.

Data collection includes interviews with key informants, including families; observations of board meetings; document reviews; and surveys. Researchers will examine the relationship between family involvement in decision-making with positive outcomes for children and families. According to Winton, this is a missing piece of evidence in the field now. "We believe that family involvement in decision-making is important. We also know it is challenging to implement and requires time, money and resources. If we could document the ways that it makes a difference, then we would know it is worth the time and money to enlist and support family participation. This evidence would encourage community leaders to make that extra effort." During Phase 2, the researchers will work in partnership with local communities in developing a model that supports family involvement.

This project is part of the Research to Practice Strand of the National Center for Early Development and Learning, which is administratively based at UNC-Chapel Hill. Winton is director of the strand and also a FPG researcher. Researchers at FPG have been involved in a number of Smart Start studies and projects over the years.

If you want to know more

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN LEADERSHIP

Winton, P., & DiVenere, N. (1995). Family-professional partnerships in early intervention personnel preparation. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 15*(3), 296–313.

Capone, A., Hull, K., & DiVenere, N. (1997). Parent-professional partnerships in preservice and inservice education. In P. Winton, J. McCollum, & C. Catlett (Eds.), *Reforming personnel preparation in early intervention* (pp. 435–451). Baltimore, MD: Paul Brookes.

PARTNERSHIPS IN SERVICE DELIVERY

Winton, P., Roberts, J., & Zeisel, S. (1997). Family-professional partnerships in managing otitis media. In J. Roberts, I. Wallace, & F. Henderson (Eds.), *Medical, developmental, and educational considerations: Otitis media in young children.* Baltimore, MD: Paul Brookes.

Winton, P. (1996). Family-professional partnerships and integrated services. In R. McWilliam (Ed.), *Rethinking pull-out services in early intervention: A professional resource* (pp. 49–69). Baltimore, MD: Paul Brookes.

Key findings from the NICHD family study

Overall, family [illegible] other demographic characteristics account for both the quantity and kind of nonmaternal care [illegible] According to a study by the NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, among the authors of [illegible] published in the *Journal of* [illegible] 1993).

Other key findings [illegible] national [illegible] around the U.S.:

- A startling finding [illegible] the quality of nonmaternal care was that at 15 months boys received less responsive care than girls in both child care homes and centers. This suggests that sex, [illegible] be a particularly salient child characteristic even in toddlers.

- Further, that such differences were observed [illegible] caregivers but not [illegible] suggests that [illegible] may be responding differently to the [illegible] the children [illegible] providers who [illegible] may be responding [illegible] children.

- [illegible] and highest [illegible] higher quality [illegible] middle. This [illegible] easily find [illegible] preschool [illegible], be that the [illegible] families with [illegible] directly subsidized, and families with higher incomes receive a child care tax credit. Those in the middle are less likely to receive any federal benefit.

- For maternal income tended to be negatively related to the hours per week that children were in child care, whereas mothers' income was positively related to the hours that children were in child care.

- In contrast to families whose infants began to receive care before they were 2 months old and who were more dependent on mothers' income than any other families studied, families whose children entered care between 3 and 5 months of age had relatively high nonmaternal income, as well as the higher mothers' income of any group. These families also tended to have fewer children, better educated mothers, and mothers who scored higher on measures of extroversion and agreeableness.

- Demographic variables other than income were not good predictors of the amount of nonmaternal care received by children at 6 and 15 months of age.

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Recent publications
by researchers at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center

Resources within reason: Materials that translate brain research into activities for daily use
C. Catlett, & P. Winton. (1998). *Young Exceptional Children, 1*(4), 29.

Infant-todder planning guide
F. Derks, B. Bardin, L. Lohn, & P. Wesley. (1998). Lewisville, NC: Kaplan Corp.

The family-centeredness of individualized family service plans
R. McWilliam, A. Ferguson, G. Harbin, P. Porter, D. Munn, & P. Vandiviere. (1998). *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 18*, 69–82.

A longitudinal study of factors associated with Wechsler Verbal and Performance IQ Scores in students from low-income African American families
F. Campbell, & L. Nabors. (1998). In J.S. Carlson (Series Ed.), *Advances in cognition and education practice*, W. Tomac, & J. Kingman (Eds.), *Conceptual issues in research on intelligence* (pp. 77–112). Greenwich, CT: JAI.

Enhancing the life course for high-risk children: Results from the Abecedarian Project.
C. Ramey, F. Campbell, & C. Blair. (1998). In J. Crane (Ed.), *Social programs that work* (pp. 163–183). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Identity and agency in cultural worlds
D. Holland, W. Lachicotte, D. Skinner, & C. Cain. (1998). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Selves in time and place: An introduction
D. Skinner, D. Holland, & A. Pach III. (1998). In D. Skinner, A. Pach III, & D. Holland (Eds.), *Selves in time and place: Identities, experience, and history in Nepal* (pp. 3–16). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Contested selves, contested femininities: Selves and society in process
D. Skinner, & D. Holland. (1998). In D. Skinner, A. Pach III, & D. Holland (Eds.), *Selves in time and place: Identities, experience, and history in Nepal* (pp. 87–110). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Early developmental trajectories of males with fragile X syndrome
D. Bailey, D. Hatton, & M. Skinner. (1998). *American Journal on Mental Retardation, 1*, 29–39.

Socially valid but difficult to implement: Creative solutions needed
P. Winton. (1998). *Journal of Early Intervention, 21*(2), 114-117.

Resources within reason: Materials for supporting fine and gross motor development
C. Catlett, P. Winton, J. Case-Smith, H. Masin, K. Perrin, B. Sher, & J. Solomon. (1998). *Young Exceptional Children, 1*(4), 28.

Otitis Media, the caregiving environment, and language and cognitive outcomes at 2 years
J. Roberts, M. Burchinal, S. Zeisel, E. Neebe, S. Hooper, J. Roush, D. Bryant, M. Mundy, & F. Henderson. (1998). *Pediatrics, 102*(2), 346–354.

Interactions of African-American infants and their mothers: Relations with development at 1 year of age
I. Wallace, J. Roberts, & D. Lodder. (1998). *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research (41)*, 900–912.

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NCEDL

Following are excerpts from a presentation made by Richard Clifford, associate director of the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL), during the fall, 1998, "Education in the Early Years" conference in Atlanta. NCEDL was one of the sponsoring agencies for the conference.

National Center for Early Development & Learning

AFTER DECADES OF THINKING THAT the changes occurring in family and work life were temporary, policy makers in the 1990s have given serious attention to increasing resources for programs for child care and early education. While this attention has been heartening, the programs have mainly been aimed at providing financial assistance to families and providing the very basic rights of family members to family leave and job security. Much remains to be done.

Changes in child care programs and early education programs are raising critical policy questions

On the other hand, little attention has been paid to the development of an early childhood services system to meet the needs of families. The result is a market-based set of services. That means a set of unconnected services reacting to the pressing needs of families for child care has emerged with little attention to the impact on the children themselves or to the long-term consequences for our society.

This approach has been quite effective at generating new programs and controlling costs, which have remained essentially flat in inflation-adjusted terms over the past decade. However, in terms of quality, we have not fared as well. We use the term quality to describe the degree to which programs meet the needs of young children — protection from injury and disease and enhancement of learning potential. Several major studies of early childhood services have painted a rather bleak picture. Reports that less than 15% of child care centers and family child care homes can be rated as good are disturbing. Salaries for those who care for and educate our youngest citizens are among the lowest of any work group in the country. Turnover rates for people working in these settings are three times those for teachers in elementary and secondary schools.

Four policy questions

Over the next decade the US must deal with four pressing policy issues related to services for young children. I will phrase them as "Who cares?" "Who serves?" "Who governs?" And "Who pays?"

Who cares?

We allow virtually anyone to be a teacher for children below kindergarten age in most states in the U.S. This contrasts with kindergarten teachers who are universally required to hold at least an undergraduate degree and a formal teaching certificate. No state has an effective system for monitoring and upgrading the training of early childhood professionals, and no state mandates college-level training. Is this good enough for America's future?

Who serves?

In the U.S., we have a parallel set of players in the early childhood field. We have Head Start, child care centers (for profit, nonprofit, and public), family child care (both regulated and unregulated), school-based prekindergarten programs, early childhood intervention programs, and family and relative care. We have no policies to establish the relative roles of each of these service providers. Will we let the marketplace decide which providers will survive?

Who governs?

With the wide variety of service providers we have a nebulous governance structure for services. Many programs are governed by a set of child care regulations set by states. Some have to meet federal standards (Head Start). Some have to meet standards set by education agencies. Many do not have to meet any external set of standards. This situation puts enormous financial pressures on the regulated providers since most services are paid for by the families themselves. Some overarching decisions are needed about the role of government in relation to these programs.

Who pays?

Best estimates are that 30–40% of the cost of early childhood services is born by some level of government. While business and industry have been identified as partners in providing services, they provide only about 1% of the costs. Parents continue to be the primary source of financing services for children prior to entry into kindergarten. High quality services for young children are expensive. Economic pressures force parents to make unacceptable choices in regard to how to allocate scarce family financial resources. Are we willing to have parents continue to be responsible for paying for these services?

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NCEDL

How one state has developed a

The collaborative service model

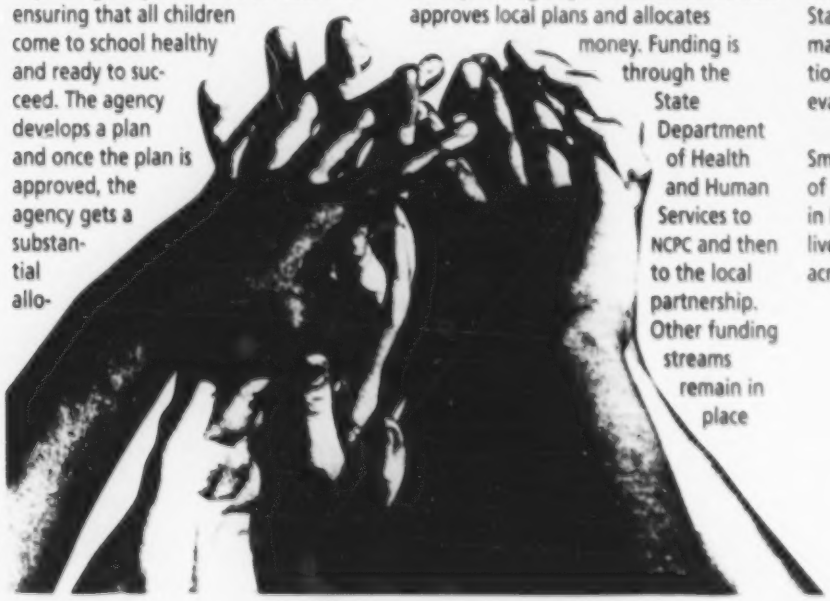
How one state provides services for young children

In his Atlanta presentation, Dick Clifford pointed out that there appear to be two fundamental approaches to handling services for young children. One is a single-service model and one is a collaborative model. Clifford discussed the collaborative model using the Smart Start initiative in North Carolina as his example. The operation and early results of Smart Start were featured in a previous issue of *Early Developments* (Vol. 1, No. 3). Here are excerpts from his talk.

The funding and infrastructure of Smart Start

The heart of Smart Start is a set of nonprofit agencies established in each county (in a few cases multi-county agencies). Each agency, usually called a partnership for children, is governed by a board comprised of the major early childhood players in the community, business leaders, parents, and other community leaders. (See related article on page 10.)

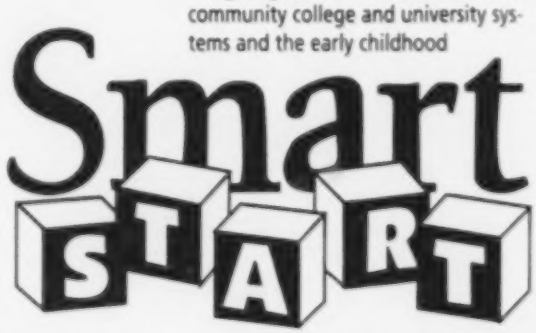
Individual agencies are charged with improving early childhood services and ensuring that all children come to school healthy and ready to succeed. The agency develops a plan and once the plan is approved, the agency gets a substantial allocation. North Carolina is spending about $100 million annually for the first 45 of the 100 counties in the state. The cost is projected to be somewhat over $300 million a year when all counties are fully integrated. This money complements existing resources for child care, Head Start, public schools, early intervention, and family support.



Some 95% of the funding for Smart Start is from state tax revenues funded from the general fund of the state. The enabling legislation requires a match of 5% cash and 5% in kind from other sources. Most of the cash match has come from business and industry with smaller amounts from foundation and matching federal government grants.

The NC Partnership for Children (NCPC) is a nonprofit agency at the state level that approves local plans and allocates money. Funding is through the State Department of Health and Human Services to NCPC and then to the local partnership. Other funding streams remain in place through traditional agencies. Staff of NCPC provides technical assistance. For example, a common financial accounting system has been adopted, and regular training is provided to executive directors of the local partnerships.

Another part of the overall Smart Start program is TEACH Early Childhood, which brings together the resources of the community college and university systems and the early childhood providers. Financial incentives are offered staff who improve their education and are willing to work with young children.



An ongoing evaluation of the Smart Start initiative provides formative information to help with program modifications as well as summative data for evaluation.

Smart Start has changed the expectations of parents, providers and policy makers in North Carolina and is improving the lives of children and their families all across the state.

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Research spotlight

Recent findings at FPG

The Family-Centeredness of Individualized Family Service Plans

R.A. McWilliam, Ardith Ferguson, Gloria Harbin, Patricia Porter, Duncan Munn, & Patricia Vandivere. (1999). *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 18*(2), 69–82.

THE LINCHPIN OF EARLY INTERVENTION for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families is the individualized family service plan (IFSP). This is the document that lists both the outcomes for the family and the services required to achieve those outcomes. The family is supposed to participate in the development of the IFSP. Because it is supposed to be a tool for the family and one that reflects their concerns, priorities, and resources, investigators at FPG, with officials from the state of North Carolina, assessed the family centeredness of 100 randomly selected IFSPs from four agency types (home-based early intervention, home-based health department, center-based segregated, and center-based inclusive).

Overall, the items that were rated highest (according to a number of factors) were identifying the family's role and writing in the active voice. The lowest-rated items were integration across disciplines/professionals, specificity, and positiveness. Overwhelmingly more child-rated goals were written compared to family-related goals.

Other findings

- Home-based health department IFSPs contained about the same number of family-related concerns as child-related concerns. IFSPs from the other three programs showed far fewer family-related concerns.
- Center-based segregated IFSPs contained more child-related long-range outcomes than did IFSPs from the other programs.
- Center-based inclusive IFSPs contained more family-related long-range outcomes than did the others.
- Home-based health department IFSPs had one half as many child-related goals as the others.
- Center-based segregated IFSPs had one half as many family-related goals as the others.

The authors said that in 1993, when the data for this study were collected, the focus of family goals and the level of goal specificity had not changed much since 1986, when IFSPs were first mandated. They were still overwhelmingly child related and nonspecific.

These results suggest that training in family-centered practices should include skills in IFSP development. Training should also address the characteristics of a family-centered IFSP: writing, active voice, positiveness, judgment, necessity, specificity, context-appropriateness, match outcome, inclusion, target date, integration, and family's role. These efforts could increase the likelihood of IFSP development being used as a medium for supporting families. The document itself could even become useful and appreciated.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center

early Developments

Fall 1999 Volume 3, No. 3

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Field notes

This issue of *Early Developments* tells the stories of how some of today's projects at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center (FPG) evolved from earlier institutes and projects into down-to-earth help for professionals and families, into models for systems change, and into assessment tools to help administrators, policymakers, and ultimately, of course, children and their families. In a few cases, the chain has been direct with the same researcher(s) or group of researchers completing one study and then taking the next logical step. Such is the case with a series of projects involving inservice and preservice training of teachers, and described in an article beginning on page 8.

In most cases the connection has been institutional, with large projects and institutes creating a caldron of ideas that have spawned projects well into the future. For example, 13 investigators were involved with the Carolina Institute for Research on Early Education for the Handicapped (CIREEH) project in the 1980s. A story about some of CIREEH 's "grandchildren" today begins on page 4.

A FPG project more than two decades ago about curriculum led circuitously to some of the most widely used assessment tools in America. That story begins on page 11.

So while research may be more complicated, the public outreach mission of FPG hasn't changed: Helping children and their families is still our bottom line.

In our special section about the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL), also based at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, we highlight one of the first national conferences dedicated to professional development and compensation for the early childhood workforce. We also look at a new product aimed at delivering the results of research faster and in an easily accessible format. These stories are on pages 14–15.

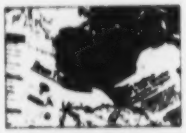
Errata: In the last Early Developments, a book edited by Martha Cox and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Causes and Consequences, was mentioned in an article on parenthood. The full title is Conflict and Cohesion in Families: Causes and Consequence published by Lawrence Erlbaum.

By the way, *Early Developments* is online at our website in PDF format and may be freely downloaded and reprinted. If you want additional printed copies, they are $1 each plus shipping costs. Please address your requests for additional copies to Nancy Pruden at 919-966-4221 or email the FPG publications office at <publications@mail.fpg.unc.edu>.

—Loyd Little
editor

Visit the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center website at <www.fpg.unc.edu>

***FINDING OUR WAY—** how early family research led to practical help for professionals and families, page 4*



***MAPPING THE FUTURE—** changing the ways early childhood professionals are trained, page 8*

***BUILDING BLOCKS—** research leads to quality assessment tools, page 11*

***MAKING GAINS—** national conference examines compensation and training of the early childhood workforce, page 11*

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From the director's office

The road from research to practice

Sometimes research has immediate results that are of practical use. This is, of course, the universal hope of researchers, practitioners, parents, and policy makers. More often, however, research begins with more fundamental questions about how things work. Once we understand how something works, then we can figure out how to make it work better.

In this issue of *Early Developments*, we trace how several projects at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center began, their evolution and transformation into new projects, and the products or benefits that were derived from these projects over the years. For example, a project to create an early childhood curriculum led to the development of the *Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale* (ECERS) which gave program administrators a valuable tool to help make changes in programs. It also gave policymakers more precise data to help assess the effectiveness of programs.

Another example: Early FPG research showed that individualized service plans for inclusion needed to be more family centered. That meant changes in how service providers and center operators approached such plans and that, in turn, led to creating practical models for affecting change in the education and preparation of service providers.

From our work over three decades, we have learned two fundamental lessons. First, important problems regarding young children and the programs that serve children and families cannot be fixed quickly. The issues are too complicated and the barriers to change too great. Only through sustained focus on an issue can meaningful change occur. Second, it is sometimes impossible to predict, at the beginning of a project, what the final useful product from that project might be.

The key is

- identifying an important problem,
- studying as many aspects of that problem as possible,
- brainstorming with the beneficiaries (teachers, parents, etc.) of the research about a number of possible solutions, and then
- trying out solutions that have a good chance of succeeding.

—Don Bailey

Bailey is director of the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center and professor in the School of Education at UNC-Chapel Hill

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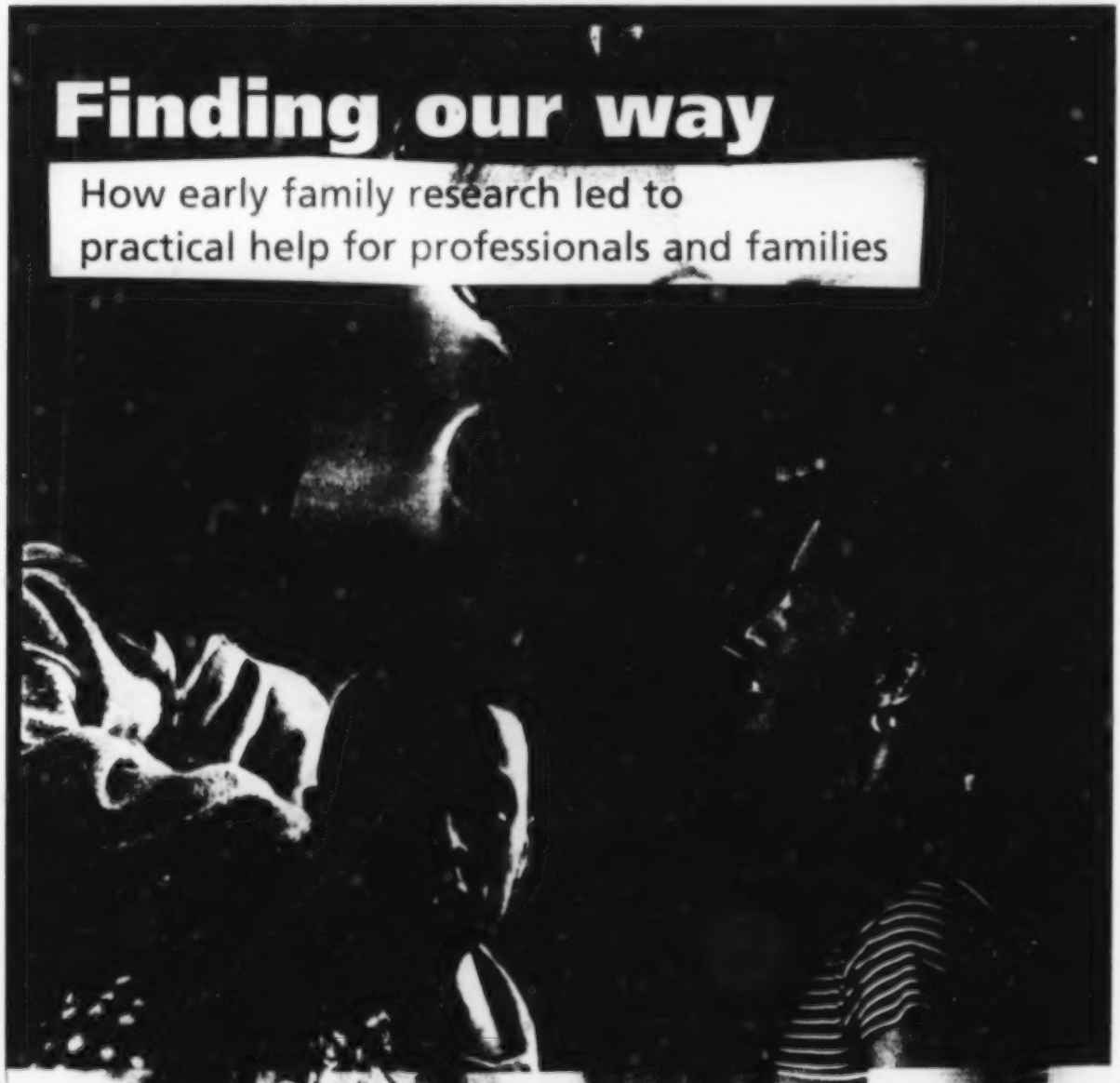
Finding our way

How early family research led to practical help for professionals and families



The evolution from research projects to practice is rarely a straight line or a short step. For example, retreats will be held next year in Atlantic Beach, NC to prepare parents of young children to become leaders in a variety of advocacy and advisory roles with early intervention agencies and organizations across the state.

[redacted] resources for North Carolina families with children with disabilities can be traced back to institutes and research that began more than two decades ago at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center (FPG) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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ONE OF THE EARLIEST SUCH INSTITUTES was the Carolina Institute on Research and Early Education for the Handicapped (CIREEH). "It was one of four similar institutes in the nation funded in the 1970s by the U.S. Bureau of Education, as it was called then, to produce research to help in the educating of children with disabilities," said Jim Gallagher, CIREEH's principal investigator and also FPG director at the time.

CIREEH was one of the first large-scale research projects to examine family involvement in programs for preschool children with disabilities. The institute ran for 10 years and among its achievements are:

- research on how families adjust to the birth of a child with disabilities (they cope remarkably well, especially when they receive early help from professionals);
- the development of programs that encourage specialists working with children with disabilities to focus on the family as well as the child;
- the development of dozens of curriculum items for use with children under a year of age with various types of disabilities; and
- the creation of numerous assessment scales.

An example of CIREEH's legacies is *Family Assessment in Early Intervention* by Don B. Bailey Jr., now FPG director, and Investigator Rune J. Simeonsson. The book, published in 1988, was an outgrowth of the CIREEH's F.A.M.I.L.I.E.S. Project, a five-year study of families with young handicapped children enrolled in a home-based intervention network in North Carolina.

Bailey said, "It's a natural evolution, particularly at an institution such as FPG where we have many researchers working together and in collaboration with others. Taking the research of one project and designing a more refined project to answer questions raised by the first project is a natural progression for us. And more often than not, this leads to implications and help for personnel preparation, professionals, and families."

CIREEH's beehive of activity also helped spawn a 1989 study by Bailey, Virginia Buysse, Rebecca Edmondson, and Tina M. Smith (all at UNC-Chapel Hill) that examined the perceptions of professionals in four states concerning family-centered services in early intervention. And that led to the development of a scale to determine perceptions of how families are included in an early intervention program or community. The scale was called *FOCAS: Family Orientation of Community and Agency Services.* Later came *Guidelines and Recommended Practices for the Individual Family Service Plan,* published in 1991 by the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance System (NECTAS) and the Association for the Care of Children's Health.

Family-centered practices

The work of CIREEH also led to one of the larger current projects at FPG: Latino Families of Children with Mental Retardation. "We are looking at how families adapt to a child with mental retardation, focusing on three areas: beliefs about mental retardation, its causes, treatment options, and ultimate expectations for the child with mental retardation; perceived family needs that extend beyond direct intervention services for the child; and perceived usefulness of professional and agency services," said Debra Skinner, project director.

FPG's early work with families and professionals also helped generate another project—Longitudinal Study of Boys with Fragile X Syndrome and Their Families. Fragile X syndrome is the most

NEILS longitudinal study

The long history of the Frank Porter Graham Center's research into family involvement in programs for preschool children with disabilities continues to the present: Today, Rune J. Simeonsson and four other FPG investigators are part of a national team conducting the National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study (NEILS)—funded by the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education.

NEILS is a five-year study designed to provide answers to four main questions:

- Who are the children and families receiving early intervention services?
- What early intervention services do participating children and families receive and how are those services delivered?
- What outcomes do participating children and families experience?
- How do outcomes relate to variations in child and family characteristics and services provided?

More than 3,300 children and their families are being followed from 3 to 5 counties in each of 20 states. Families with children between birth and 31 months of age who are newly entering early intervention are being enrolled in NEILS. Other data presented in the fall of 1999 during a presentation at the National Center for Health Statistics' National Conference on Health Statistics:

Categories of Conditions, Impairments & Functional Limitations

Speech/communication impairment	41.1%
Prenatal/perinatal abnormalities	19.0%
Motor delay	17.5%
Global delay	12.0%
Congenital disorders	8.9%
Intellectual/cognitive impairment or delay	7.2%
Central nervous system disorder	6.5%
Social/environmental risk	3.9%
Social/behavioral impairment	3.7%
Sensory systems	3.3%
Self-help skills	2.6%
Neurologic impairment	2.2%
Musculoskeletal disorders	2.0%
Illness or chronic disease	1.9%
Use of medical devices	1.4%

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common inherited cause of developmental disability, affecting as many as one in 2,500 people. Since 1993, FPG has been following selected young children with fragile X syndrome and their families in Virginia and the Carolinas.

"A pattern in this kind of research is clear," said Bailey. "Make sure we have the big picture, collect and analyze good data, postulate and examine outcomes, create and test models of change, and then figure out how to get changes that work to professionals, teachers, and families. We've been fortunate at FPG to have this continuity in our research and our researchers."

Helping parents & families

FPG's family research has led to another of the center's newest projects, the Parent Leadership Development Project. Begun in 1999, the Parent Leadership Development Project is working to develop a cadre of parents to fill a variety of advocacy and advisory roles with state and local agencies and organizations.

"Comprehensive, high-quality, individualized early care and intervention for children with disabilities now requires simultaneous attention to child development, community building, professional development, and family involvement," said Virginia Buysse, co-principal investigator along with Pat Wesley. "Families should be considered essential advisors in public policy, research, personnel preparation, and program development, as well as partners in all aspects of their children's care and education."

The Parent Leadership Project is recruiting 72 parents and other family members of children with disabilities interested in developing or improving partnerships with professionals. These parents will receive intensive training, including follow-up activities to develop leadership skills. This cadre will then be linked to institutions of higher learning, and organizations and agencies providing early education, early intervention, and family support services.

Other major offshoots of CIREEH were a project named the Carolina Institute for Research on Infant Personnel Preparation and a series of projects aimed at changing early intervention personnel development systems. These are discussed in an article beginning on page 8.

Data from the NEILS longitudinal study

Data are already beginning to flow in from the study. The first round of findings, based on a larger sample, indicate that of 5,667 children entering the early intervention system, 59% were reported to qualify for services because of a documented developmental delay, 28% with a diagnosed condition, and 13% who were eligible because of being at risk for developmental delay.

Neils data collection is being conducted by:

- **Telephone interviews with families for information about child and family characteristics, child functioning, and families' perceptions of services. Families are being interviewed when their child enters early intervention, when their child is three years old, and again when their child is five years old.**
- **Semiannual reports from service providers on early intervention services provided to NEILS families, included information about children's transitions out of early intervention.**
- **One-time survey of service providers about their background, training, and the ways they deliver services.**
- **One-time survey of teachers about the children's programs and services being provided when the NEILS children are five years old.**

In addition to Simeonsson, other FPG researchers in the study are Don Bailey, Robin McWilliam, Anita Scarborough, and Lynne Kahn.

The NEILS study is being conducted by SRI International, Menlo Park, CA.

If you want to know more

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Recent publications

By researchers at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center

Early intervention as we know it

D. Bailey, L. Aytch, S. Odom, F. Symons, & M. Wolery. (1999). *Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Research Reviews, 5*, 11–20.

Awareness, use, and satisfaction with services for Latino parents of young children with disabilities

D. Bailey, D. Skinner, P. Rodriguez, D. Gut, & V. Correa, (1999). *Exceptional Children, 65* (3), 367–381.

A review of interventions for preschoolers with aggressive and disruptive behavior

D. Bryant, L. H. Vizzard, M. Willoughby, & J. Kupersmidt. (1999). *Early Education and Development, 10* (1), 47–68.

The environment and mental retardation

D. Bryant, & K. Maxwell. (1999). *International Review of Psychiatry, 11*, 56–67.

Why and how working women choose child care: A review with a focus on infancy

E. P. Pungello, & B. Kurtz-Costes. (1999). *Developmental Review, 19* (2), 31–96.

The early childhood environment rating scale, Revised edition

T. Harms, R. Clifford, & D. Cryer. (1998). NY: Teachers College Press.

The prediction of process quality from structural features of child care

L. Phillipsen, M. Burchinal, C. Howes, & D. Cryer. (1997). *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 12*. 281–303.

Defining and assessing quality in early intervention programs for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families: Challenges and unresolved issues

L. Aytch, D. Cryer, D. Bailey, & L. Selz. (1999). *Early Education and Development, 10* (1), 7–23.

Services for young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Voices of parents and providers

L. Sperry, K. Whaley, E. Shaw, & K. Brame. (1999). *Infants and Young Children, 11*(4), 17–33.

QuickNotes: Inclusion resources for early childhood professionals (2nd ed.)

P. Wesley, B. Dennis, & S. Tyndall. (1999). Lewisville, NC: Kaplan Corp.

Embedding personnel development into early intervention service delivery: Elements in the process

N. Stiffler, & N. Fire. (1999). *Infants and Young Children, 11*(3), 50–61.

Family and professional congruence in communication assessments of preschool boys with fragile X syndrome

S.C. Jackson, & J.E. Roberts. (1999). *Journal of Early Intervention, 22*(2), 137–151.

Quality of early childhood programs in inclusive and noninclusive settings

V. Buysse, P. Wesley, D. Bryant, & D. Gardner. (1999). *Exceptional Children, 65* (3), 301–314.

Improving quality in early childhood environments through on-site consultation

S. Palsha, & P. Wesley. (1998). *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 18* (4), 243–253.

Inclusive preschool environments: Strategies for planning

B. Hardin, P Wesley, & L. Lohr. (1998). Lewisville, NC: Kaplan Corp.

Knowledge versus policy in special education

J. Gallagher. (1999). In R. Gallimore, L. Bernheimer, D. MacMillan, D. Speece, & S. Vaughn (Eds.), *Developmental perspectives on children with high-incidence disabilities* (pp. 245–261).Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Policy options for early childhood: A model for decisionmaking

J. Gallagher, & R. Rooney. (1999). *Early [illegible] 10* (1), 69–83.

Accountability for gifted students

J. Gallagher. (1998). *Phi [illegible]*

Infant-toddler planning guide

[illegible] Derks, B. Hardin, L. Lohr, & P. Wes[illegible] Lewisville, [illegible]lan Corp

Integrating therapies into the classroom

S. M. Scott, R. A. McWilliam, & L. Mayhew. (1999). *Young Exceptional Children, 2* (3), 15–24.

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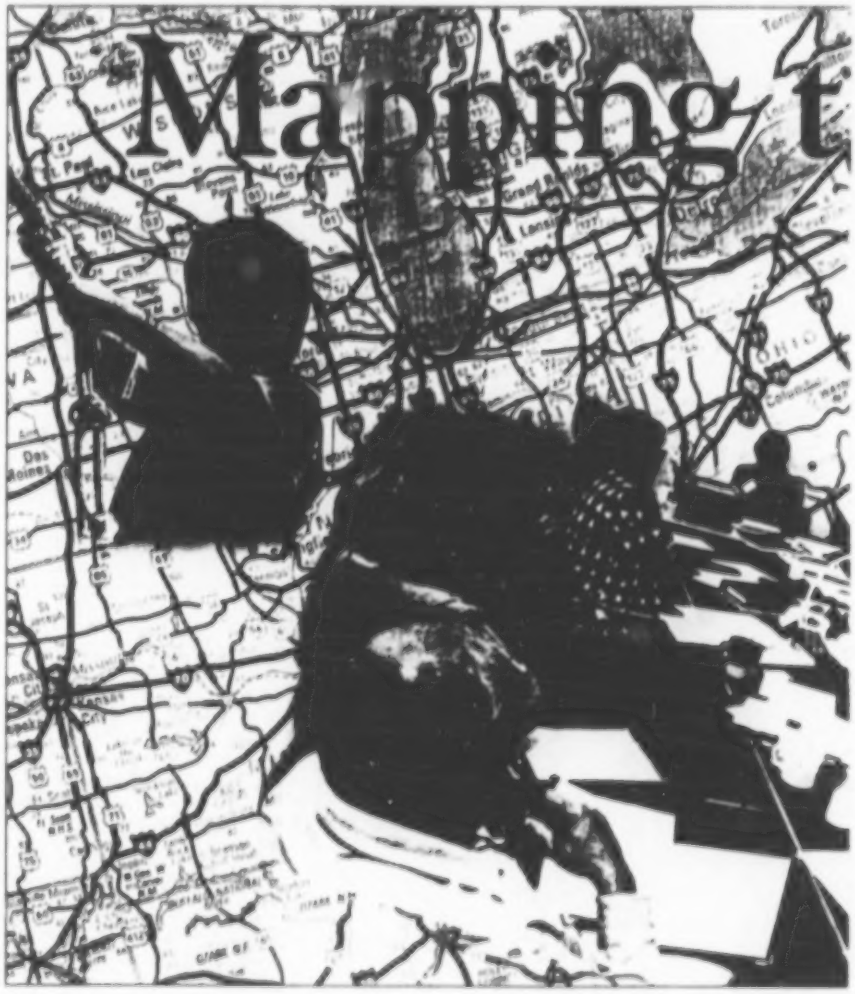
This fall, North Dakota will hold a faculty institute with interdisciplinary teams drawn from community and tribal colleges, families, and practitioners—these teams will focus on increasing family-centered and interdisciplinary practices in the preservice programs.

A group in Idaho has organized a statewide Consortium for Preparation of Early Childhood Professionals, and Baylor University in Texas now offers an interdisciplinary early intervention minor.

All of these very practical changes in how we prepare early childhood personnel have their roots in an institute that began at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center more than a decade ago.



THAT INSTITUTE GAVE RISE TO A COLLABORATIVE SERIES of projects that began changing the way early childhood professionals are trained. In doing so, researchers created new rating scales for assessing family-centered practices in early intervention, refined the case method as a way to help prepare professionals, developed models for states and institutions of higher learning (including community colleges) to beef up their preservice and inservice training of early childhood professionals, and created a model that helped North Carolina early intervention programs apply a family-centered approach.

The institute was the Carolina Institute for Research on Infant Personnel Preparation (CIRIPP), which ran from 1987 to 1992. The principal investigator was Don Bailey, director of the Frank Porter Graham Center. "With the implementation of the early intervention legislation (Part H of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA]), we needed to take a closer look at the personnel training of early intervention professionals. We needed to know many things: Did these people have sufficient training for implementing the family-centered, interdisciplinary approach in the new law? What was 'sufficient training'? Were our institutions responding to new needs and demands?"

First, CIRIPP conducted a national survey of college and university programs in 11 key disciplines to see how students were being prepared to work with infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. Other surveys focused on barriers, models of training, com-

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petencies, best practices and so forth. Some of the findings and conclusions from these surveys were:

- In most disciplines, with the exception of social work and nursing, students received virtually no information about working with families.
- Professionals consistently reported a discrepancy between typical and desired practices in working with families.
- It was clear that changes in the pre-service preparation of professionals would be slow to non-existent. A mechanism was needed to promote systems change.
- Families and professionals needed to be involved in decisions about changing practices.

Over the next five years, CIRIPP faculty developed new curricula, assessed alternative instruction strategies, worked out ways to promote family-centered attitudes among professionals, created inservice training methods, and tested new family-centered systems for service coordination.

Bailey said, "Our findings projected little change in preservice programs because of competing areas of specialization, lack of faculty with expertise, and the sometimes contradictory and competing requirements of state agencies, professional organizations, and universities. As for inservice training, we found that large numbers of direct service providers needed training about new federal regulations. In other words, we found a major lack of collaboration and cooperation at a time when it was needed more than ever."

Other research spin-offs

Among other things, CIRIPP researchers

- developed and evaluated the case method of instruction as a supplement to traditional training of early childhood professionals;
- published a manual for workshop facilitators, *Implementing Family-Centered Services in Early Intervention: A Team-based Model for Change*; and
- developed and published the *Brass Tacks* series of instruments to help early intervention programs, teams, and individual professionals determine the extent to which their practices reflect a family-centered approach.

In the final CIRIPP report, Bailey and his team noted these implications:

- in the area of preservice, the average entry-level professional from the key disciplines is likely to enter the field with little infancy, family or interdisciplinary experience or knowledge; and
- at the inservice level, large numbers of direct service providers need training to the Part H (now Part C) of IDEA initiatives. This training must address the systems and family barriers preventing them from being as family-centered as they would like to be.

The next step

One of the 18 CIRIPP faculty members working with Bailey was Pam Winton, who took part of the CIRIPP findings to the next level. Winton said, "Our research revealed the enormous personnel challenges. What we needed were strategies and models to help personnel development systems make changes. And the biggest challenge was that there was no one 'personnel development system'."

What existed was a conglomeration of different state and local agencies, departments within universities and community colleges, and so on, that all had responsibility for personnel preparation but that didn't necessarily work together and might even be giving conflicting messages about best practices, she explained.

"For example, in one university there could be three different disciplinary departments preparing students headed for early intervention jobs; each discipline had its own

e future

Research projects can lead to revisions in how early childhood professionals are trained

traditions, strategies, and philosophies about how to work with children. Working with families was not typically part of their training. The people who suffered were the families and children who relied on a smoothly operating interdisciplinary team to provide them with the services they needed," Winton said.

The answer was obvious: a major change in how state agencies and universities operated. She said, "Most practitioners did not necessarily want to be trained by someone in the 'ivory tower' who probably didn't have recent practical experience; and the state agencies in charge of inservice training did not automatically turn to universities for help for the same reason. State agencies wanted trainers who could easily relate to the daily challenges facing practitioners. To put it bluntly," she continued, "we were trying to bring the ivory tower and the trenches together, and neither side was comfortable with that. It was like trying to arrange a marriage between two people who didn't even want to go out on a blind date together."

The only way to address this, Winton decided, was to create an integrated early intervention personnel development system. That idea landed one of four regional faculty-training institutes funded by the U.S. Department of Education in 1992, the year that CIRIPP ended. One of the four was the Southeastern Institute for Faculty Training (SIFT) headed by Winton and FPG researcher Camille Catlett.

SIFT's goal was to develop and field test a model for reforming early intervention personnel development systems in 15 southeastern states. The model they developed has now been refined and replicated through three additional projects that they direct—SIFT-OUT, SCRIPT and NEW SCRIPTS. Their newest project, NEW SCRIPTS, focuses on community colleges and diversity issues.

Putting it in perspective

To put this in perspective, since 1992 these four projects (SIFT, SIFT-OUT, SCRIPT, and New Scripts) have worked with 28 states to improve the preparation of their early childhood intervention workforce. Winton said, "By using a sequence of planning, training, follow-up, and evaluation, interdisciplinary teams of faculty members, family members, practitioners, and state agency representatives have created state-specific changes at a systemic level, at a program/practice level, and at an individual level."

The examples at the beginning of this article are only a few of the actual, practical outcomes from the SIFT and SCRIPT projects.

Another one of those original researchers with CIRIPP was P.J. McWilliam who took the case method and turned it into a significant teaching technique. After CIRIPP, McWilliam directed a special Case Method of Instruction (CMI) project that expanded awareness of CMI and the availability of appropriate instructional materials for case-method teaching of early intervention personnel preparation.

McWilliam also directed the Carolina Model Inservice Training Project that created a curriculum for training early intervention teams to implement a family-centered approach in their daily work with children and families. Most recently, McWilliam is directing the CMI-Outreach Project, which is designed to help university instructors incorporate the case method in their preservice and inservice instruction.

Bailey said, "This rolling forward of our work into more detailed and more practical use reflects one of the strengths of a large, strong research institution. These projects don't reflect so much one person following a line of research as they do the research institution and all its members building on the findings of earlier work by earlier researchers. By taking our research to the outreach stage, we show our commitment to use research opportunities to ultimately benefit children and their families."

If you want to know more...

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Building blocks

Research that led to new quality assessment tools & changed personnel preparation programs

A 1975 project named the Early Childhood Education Curriculum Development Program at FPG is the linear grandparent of...

a project in Sweden that allows preschool teachers to analyze and upgrade the quality of their own programs;

a military family child care home accreditation program for the U.S. Army, Navy and Marines; and

a project in Durham, NC, that helps child care centers upgrade the quality of their care.

To name only a few of the "grandchildren."

"WHEN WE BEGAN WORKING with our curriculum development program in the late 1970s, it soon became clear that we needed a way to assess the quality of early childhood programs," said Thelma Harms, who directed that early FPG program. She and a colleague Dick Clifford went to work, and by 1980 had produced the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale* (ECERS), which has since become one of the most widely used scales to assess various aspects of quality in early childhood group care.

The ECERS was followed by three other scales, each measuring different segments of the early childhood field: The *Family Day Care Rating Scale* (FDCRS) used for programs in a provider's home; the *Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scale* (ITERS) for group programs for children from birth to 2 1/2 years; and the *School-Age Care Environmental Rating Scale* (SACERS) for before- and after-school group care programs for school-age children to age 12.

Harms said that in order to provide care and education that will permit children to experience a high quality of life while helping them develop their abilities, a program must provide for the three basic needs of children:

- ❒ Protection of their health and safety
- ❒ Building positive relationships
- ❒ Opportunities for stimulation and learning from experience

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"It takes all three to create quality care. No one component is more or less important than the others, nor can one substitute for another. Since our scales are comprehensive process quality measures, all three aspects are included," she said.

FPG director Don Bailey, who worked with Harms on some of her earlier projects, said, "FPG has a significant history of development of measuring and assessment tools. Sometimes researchers develop a scale just for gathering research data; at other times, the development of an assessment tool is suggested by the data. Once early childhood program directors and professionals have reliable measures of aspects of their programs, they can make changes and improvements in their programs and personnel development plans."

The ECERS and ITERS were used as comprehensive quality measures in the National Child Care Staffing Study of 1989 and the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study (CQO) of 1995 and 1999—major studies on the effects of child care on child development. In 1998, Harms, Clifford, and Cryer brought out the revised ECERS (ECERS-R) that incorporated changes to make the ECERS function better in inclusive and culturally diverse settings.

ECERS has been translated into a number of languages and used in research and program improvement in many countries including Germany, Italy, Spain, Iceland, England, Sweden, Russia, Portugal, Hungary, and Canada. *(See related story on page 13 about how North Carolina is using the ECERS in a new statewide rating system of child care programs.)*

FPG's experience in quality care and assessments also helped create an accreditation system for the nation's military. In the early 1990s, two private foundations (Mailman and Carnegie) funded a national committee to examine family child care quality criteria. That committee was headed by Harms and Debbie Cryer, who has also worked on measures. That led to an examination of national quality criteria for family child care followed by an FPG study comparing quality recognition systems for family child care. Eventually it led to the development of the Military Family Child Care Home Accreditation program which was completed in 1997.

New assessment tool

If there is a clear need by child care professionals in general for assessing programs, that need surely extends to early intervention programs as well. A FPG team lead by Lynette Aytch is in the final stages of completing a new *Early Intervention Services Assessment Scale* (EISAS) to examine the quality of early intervention services provided to young children with disabilities and their families. Aytch said her team is developing a program version and a parent questionnaire.

"With accountability a keyword in government financing today, scales are an important tool in evaluating programs."

"These types of assessment scales," said Aytch, "are valuable for a number of reasons. With accountability a keyword in government financing today, scales are an important tool in evaluating programs. Well-constructed scales allow administrators and service providers to assess program practices, and parent questionnaires offer families the opportunity to provide input into the program evaluation process."

Changes in child care

The ECERS-R scale is currently being used by a project in Durham County, NC, to help enhance quality in child care centers with practical and professional assistance, and with money. The project is Quality Enhancement Support and Training (QUEST) and is funded by the NC Partnership for Children, the state's Smart Start project whose mission is making sure children are ready for school when they enter the first grade.

One of the QUEST consultants is Kate Thegen, a research assistant with the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL), also based at UNC-Chapel Hill. She explained how the project works, "A child care center or a family child care program in Durham submits a request for QUEST help, and if approved, then a QUEST consultant will perform an assessment of the center, suggest changes, offer resources and technical assistance on making changes, offer substitute teacher assistance, and make grants to cover some of the changes."

The process begins with an assessment, which includes such tools as the ECERS-R. "Also," said Thegen, "our on-site consultation model is based on a model originally created by Partnerships for Inclusion (PFI)."

"QUEST is making a significant difference in child care centers in Durham and is making it on a very practical level. For example, one of the areas I've worked in has been helping teachers to understand and use the ECERS scale so they could continue using it after the QUEST consultant leaves," she said. Thegen is also a former child care center director. Programs similar to QUEST are getting underway in other North Carolina counties as well.

A related technical assistance program, based on assessments with the Harms, Clifford and Cryer environment rating scales, is now being conducted by Harms and Theresa Sull for the District of Columbia Office of Early Childhood Development. Harms and Sull have trained 25 technical assistance specialists in Washington, DC, who are providing on-site technical assistance to centers and family child care homes over the next year. A rigorous evaluation of this technical assistance program is being carried out in order to find out more about characteristics that create success in the process of technical assistance. **e**

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Quality care

In the spring of this year, North Carolina revised the way it rates the 9,000 regulated day care centers and homes in the states. Evaluations take into account staff education, center's history of compliance, disciplinary techniques, how teachers play with children, and staff/child ratios, among other considerations.

Research at the Frank Porter Graham Center was used to help develop the new ratings. Also, the fact that North Carolina is taking the initiative in upgrading its day care centers ratings can be traced, in part, to FPG research. Both actions are descendants of the national Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers study (CQO), begun in 1993, and of earlier FPG projects involving quality care.

The CQO project, a collaboration of four universities, included a number of FPG researchers from the very beginning. "We weren't really sure what we would find when we began this study," said Dick Clifford, a senior FPG researcher and member of the CQO team. "This was one of the first comprehensive studies to look at our care centers and document the effects of quality child care on children's development over time."

Here are just two of the findings from the first batch of data from the CQO study,* published in 1995:

- ❒ The quality of child care is primarily related to higher staff-child ratios, staff education, and administrators' prior experience. Other factors include teacher wages, education, and specialized training.
- ❒ Child care at most centers in the United States is poor to mediocre, with 40% of infants and toddlers in rooms having less-than-minimally acceptable quality.

But the sentence in the CQO study that caught the eye of North Carolinians was this one: "North Carolina, the state with the least stringent child care standards of the four states in the study, has the highest number of poor-quality centers." (The CQO study focused on 400 randomly selected centers in North Carolina, California, Colorado, and Connecticut.)

Research on quality care leads to policy changes

The sentence was an eye-opener for many families, state administrators, and policymakers in North Carolina. So, when the state of North Carolina wanted to upgrade its child care center rating scale, it looked at a number of assessment tools created at FPG. Stephanie Fanjul, director of the North Carolina Division of Child Development, said that if a center wants to reach the top (a 5-star) rating, a voluntary rating, it must agree to be assessed using both ECERS-R (Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised) and an ITERS (Infant-Toddler Environmental Rating Scale) assessments. Both scales were developed by FPG researchers.

Don Bailey, FPG director, said, "We always examine our research for implications for public policy, personnel preparation, and additional research. It is not surprising that we are finally beginning to see changes in personnel preparation and in the regulation of child care centers and homes. This is how research ought to be used."

Head Start quality study

The same year that the first data from the CQO study came out, the Head Start Bureau decided to create a set of performance measures to provide a "report card" on how the Head Start program is doing overall. It set up a five-year project involving four Quality Research Centers. One of the four is focused on classroom quality and directed by Donna Bryant at FPG.

"We've added a recently developed measure of diversity to several widely-used measures in order to examine the patterns of relations among various aspects of quality, including the classroom environment, the nature of teacher-child interactions, and teacher involvement," said Bryant. (The new measure of diversity is the *Anti-Bias Environmental Checklist* created by Ellen Peisner-Feinberg, another FPG researcher.)

Some preliminary data from Bryant's project suggests:

- ❒ Different aspects of quality should be included in future efforts directed toward training of teachers as well as research.
- ❒ Both diversity and developmentally-appropriate practices contribute to the quality of classroom experiences for young children.
- ❒ Instruments to monitor quality should measure both teacher-child interactions and the physical environment.

* See Research Spotlight, page 16, for a summary of information from the latest round of the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes data.

Making gains...A national conference tackles ways to improve training and compensation of early childhood workers

Two days of impassioned pleas, determined efforts, patient negotiating, listening to research data, and optimistic networking characterized a Chapel Hill, NC conference held earlier this year that focused on how to upgrade the compensation and education of the early childhood workforce.

Sponsored by the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL) and four other groups, the conference brought together 180 professionals, teachers, child care center directors, leaders of national advocacy groups, researchers, and administrators and policy makers from national and state governments.

Experts shared research and strategies that set the context for often-passionate discussions. Highlights include:

- Several speakers decried the general lack of a career development ladder for child care workers. Such a ladder, they said, should support better compensation, reward training, and create organizational roles for teachers and providers. These steps would also create a stronger foundation for more diverse leadership in the field.
- Approximately 30% of early childhood teachers leave the field each year—and research is beginning to describe the serious impact of turnover and change on young children.
- Over the years, research has shown for every dollar invested in high quality child care, there is up to a $7 benefit to children, parents, and society.
- Rosemarie Vardell of the Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW) said there is a severe staff shortage facing child care centers. Wages are low, and "the market place is not taking care of the problem." She said that upgrading teaching requirements without upgrading compensation is a squandering of resources. "The entire child care system needs major new sources of funding."
- Anne Mitchell of Wheelock College said subsidies to child care can take two forms: 1) portable subsidies that follow the family such as vouchers, scholarships, and tax credits, and 2) direct subsidies that go directly to the child care system.
- In a paper entitled "Who's Missing at the Table?" written for the conference, Marcy Whitebrook of CCW wrote, "The lack of sufficient resources in early childhood settings, combined with practitioners' meager earnings, results in limited access to professional development, participation in advocacy, or other experiences for many teachers and providers."

Voices from the front lines were heard in a panel called "Perspectives from Key Stakeholders." Panel members shared stories of what it means to be a teacher, a director, a parent and a college professor facing the realities and limitations created when a workforce is shackled with wages averaging $7.50 an hour.

Six different compensation/professional development models were presented and discussed from Massachusetts, Rhode Island, California, Georgia, North Carolina's T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education And Compensation Helps), and Canada.

Conference participants interacted as members of 21 teams—10 state teams, 10 NC county teams and one national team—all of which included leaders in the early childhood field. The teams listened to experts, talked amongst themselves and crafted plans for their teams to take home to begin to institute changes.

Conference Coordinator Kate Thegen of NCEDL said follow-ups to the

"IDEAL SOLUTIONS"—
Excerpts from notes on walls around various teams

- "Consider increasing benefits (in addition to salary) to increase compensation."
- "Determine the 'living wage' for our county and persuade funding agencies that we need to pay that."
- "A career lattice is needed."
- "What do we do about an early child care worker who may not have the education, but has years of experience and an excellent reputation?"
- "We need to show a clear link between early child care and educational outcomes in school later."
- "Better evaluation tools needed."

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conference include interviews with team leaders to determine progress and barriers. Information about the conference is on the NCEDL website <www.ncedl.org> and shared through future presentations, articles, and a book.

Joan Lombardi, deputy assistant secretary for children and families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services until last year, captured the spirit of the conference in her closing remarks as "a tribute to those Americans who wake up every morning, greet parents, hug children, change diapers, read books, dry tears, and help the country work and children thrive."

Pam Winton, who directs the Research-to-Practice unit of NCEDL, said the conference is believed to be the first such national gathering to address compensation and professional development issues for the early childhood workforce.

Other Making Gains sponsors were CCW, Day Care Services Association, the NC Department of Health and Human Services Division of Child Development, and the NC Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development.

New product speeds dissemination of NCEDL research information

Recognizing a need to place research results before constituents quickly and in an easily read format, the Research-to-Practice unit of NCEDL has created a new product, *Spotlights*.

Spotlights are monthly, one-page summaries of research data, presentations by researchers, and articles written by NCEDL researchers for academic journals.

Traditionally, research data would arrive in a format for public consumption after as much as a year while the material made its way into various academic journals and into often-lengthy final reports for funding agencies. "However, much of our work today is of urgent significance not only to the research community but to practitioners in the field, families, and policymakers," said Pam Winton, who directs the Research-to-Practice unit.

By working closely with the researchers involved and using an internal review system, a *Spotlight* can typically be produced within two weeks. Furthermore, *Spotlights* can be directed toward certain constituencies. For example, one *Spotlights* explained a decision matrix aimed at helping decision makers/policy analysts weigh the pros and cons of various policy options for a public issue such as childcare quality. Another *Spotlight* discussed diarrhea and child care and was directed toward child care workers and operators of child care centers.

National Center for Early Development & Learning

Other topics among the first 10 *Spotlights* ranged from a theoretical discussion of assessing readiness of children for school, to the transition considerations for children with disabilities and their families.

The response to *Spotlights* has been quite good, according to Winton. More than 8,500 have been disseminated in paper format; many have been downloaded from the NCEDL web site, and permission has been given to other organizations to print and disseminate *Spotlights*. For example, the state of Kentucky printed 1,000 copies of *Spotlight #2* on Quality Child Care and disseminated it in a pre-school mailing packet to teachers, and the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies disseminated 500 copies of *Spotlight #1* on Kindergarten Transitions to member agencies.

Highlights from past NCEDL *Spotlights*

- Kindergarten teachers report that 48 percent of children entering kindergarten have moderate or serious problems.
- A three-year study showed that children with closer relationships to their preschool teachers showed fewer problem behaviors—this was especialiy true for boys. These children also had better language skills through kindergarten.
- Interventions involving parents and the community can be a valuable adjunct in controlling enteric diseases in child care centers.
- A common difficulty in the transition of children with disabilities from preschool programs to school-age programs is having multiple sending agencies and a single receiving agency. A recommended solution is to establish a community-wide interagency transition policy.
- NCEDL researchers are developing a new scale to assess the quality of early intervention services provided to young children and their families.

Spotlights posted on the NCEDL web site <www.ncedl.org> are in PDF format, which means they may be downloaded and printed.

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Research spotlight

Recent findings at FPG

The Children of the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study Go to School—Executive Summary

Cost Quality Study Team. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, National Center for Early Development & Learning. (1999). Available at <www.ncedl.org>.

THE COST, QUALITY AND CHILD OUTCOMES in Child Care Centers Study, begun in 1993, was designed in part to examine the influence of typical center-based child care on children's development during preschool years and as they moved into the formal education system. These children have now been followed through the end of second grade. Overall findings can be summarized in a few broad statements.

Findings

- High-quality child care is an important element in achieving the national goal of having all children ready to learn when they come to school.
- Children who attended higher quality child care centers scored higher on measures of both cognitive and social skills in child care and through the transition into school. Further, this influence of child care quality was important for children from a wide range of family backgrounds.
- High quality child care continues to positively predict children's performance well into their school careers.
- Longitudinal analysis indicated that the quality of child care experienced by these children before they entered school continued to affect their development at least through kindergarten, and in many cases through the end of second grade.
- Children who have traditionally been at risk of not doing well in school are affected more by the quality of child care experiences than other children.
- For some outcomes (math skills and problem behaviors), children whose mothers had lower levels of education were more sensitive to the negative effects of poor quality child care or received more benefits from high quality child care. Moreover, in typical child care, the influences of child care quality for children at risk were sustained through second grade.
- The quality of child care classroom practices was related to children's cognitive development, while the nature of the preschool teacher-child relationship influenced children's social development through the early school years.

The quality of the child care environment affected children's cognitive development (language and math skills) through early elementary school. The relationships children had with their teachers in child care were related to better social skills (greater cognitive/attention skills and sociability and fewer problem behaviors) over time. Children's ability to get the most benefit from both their teachers and educational environments available to them in school is what readiness is really all about, and high-quality child care experiences help children develop this ability.

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